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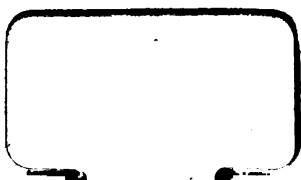
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THE "LADY MAUD."

THE "LADY MAUD:"

SCHOONER YACHT.

A NARRATIVE OF
HER LOSS ON ONE OF THE BAHAMA CAYS,
FROM THE ACCOUNT OF A GUEST ON BOARD.

BY
W. CLARK RUSSELL,
AUTHOR OF "A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART," "AN OCEAN FREE LANCE,"
"THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR,'" ETC.

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THE "LADY MAUD."

CHAPTER I.

WHEN I recovered I found myself on my back. My senses were active at once, and I had no difficulty in recollecting what had befallen us. I sat upright, and pressing my hands to my eyes, so as to clear my sight, I looked about me.

Some twenty paces away was assembled a small group of persons. These people consisted of Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton, both of whom crouched over the body of Carey, and were chafing her hands, supporting her head, and the like ; and near them Norie, wringing out his coat. I was amazed to see him alive. A little beyond sat Sir

Mordaunt, with his face bowed down to his knees and buried in his hands, and his back turned upon a recumbent figure, the head of which was hidden by a man's jacket. The man whom we had noticed on the beach when the dawn broke, and whom I now recognized as one of the crew named Tom Hunter, was down near the breakers, shading his eyes, and intently gazing towards the sea.

I took the scene in at a glance, and was beginning to count the people, to see how many we were in all, when Tripshore stepped round from behind me.

"I thought you wasn't drowned, sir," said he. "You didn't look like a drowned man. There was no good going on chafing of you. How do you feel yourself, sir?"

"I can't tell you yet, Tripshore," I answered. "Is the poor girl I came ashore with alive?"

"I don't know, sir. I've been looking at the ladies rubbing her. I think they'll pull her through."

"And Lady Brookes?" said I.

"Ah, she's dead, sir. She was dead afore Tom and I could haul her through the breakers."

I asked him to give me his hand, and then struggled on to my feet. My limbs were sound, and I suffered from no other inconvenience than a feeling of faintness and giddiness. No one noticed me until I was close to the group, and then Miss Tuke, seeing me, uttered a cry, started to her feet, and grasped my hand. Sir Mordaunt must have heard her, but he did not raise his head nor shift his posture.

"Thank God you are spared!" cried the girl, speaking wildly, like a delirious person.

"Are these all of us?" I said, motioning with my hand.

"These are all—and my aunt is dead! Oh, Mr. Walton, my aunt is dead!" she exclaimed.

I could make no reply. Mrs. Stretton

put out her hand for mine. I gave it to her, and she pressed it. She could not rise, because Carey's head lay on her lap, but the poor maid was alive, and followed me with her eyes, though she could not move for exhaustion.

I stepped over to Lady Brookes' body, and lifted the jacket. It was not necessary to look twice at her face to know that she was dead. Her features were very calm; death was in every line; her eyes were open, and the expression they gave the face was like a command to keep it covered.

As I replaced the jacket softly, Sir Mordaunt turned his head. His face was dreadfully hollow, his complexion ashen, he was without coat or hat, and the strong wind having dried his hair, was blowing it wildly upon his head. His clothes were streaming wet—as, for that matter, were mine and the others'. He gazed at me for a while like a man struggling with his mind. Then said he, "Walton, my wife is dead. I brought

her from home to save her life, and my hope and my love have ended in that!" And he pointed to the body. "Why am I spared? I vow to God I would willingly be dead." Thus he went on complaining and mourning until his voice died away, when he burst into tears, and turned his back upon his wife's body, and resumed his former attitude.

Bitter sad this blow was indeed, to him and to all of us. I looked at the body, with a dreadful remorse in my heart. I felt as if I had killed her by that struggle on the yacht's forecastle. But it would not do to sit lamenting our misfortunes and bewailing the dead. We were eight living men and women, castaways, and in me, at least, the instinct of life was a passion that seemed to have taken a violence from my salvation from the sea that lay boiling and roaring in front of me. Where had we been shipwrecked? What was this island? What shelter would it offer us? Was help to be

obtained? These were the questions which swarmed into my head.

There was a small space of rising ground a short walk from where Sir Mordaunt and the others were, and I made my way to it, that I might be alone and able to reflect, and also because it was an eminence that would furnish me with some view of the island. My movements were very languid, and my bones ached sorely; but I was grateful to find that my limbs were sound, which seemed an incredible thing when I reflected upon the terrible violence with which I had been dashed ashore.

I gained the top of the little hill, for I may as well call it so, though it was no more than a small rise in the land, about sixteen or twenty feet above the level of the island, and stood there leaning against the wind, that was now very nearly a whole gale. I first looked towards the sea. Where the reef was the water was blowing up in clouds of smoke, as though it was really

boiling, as it only seemed to be. It was the most terrific picture of commotion I had beheld for many a long year. The great Atlantic seas, reared to a vast height by the fury of the wind, came rolling along with a wild kind of majesty out of the haze of spray which narrowed the horizon to within a league; the crests of them broke into wildernesses of shining froth as they ran; but whenever they smote the reef, that lay in a curve trending on my right to the westward, and coiling round into the north with the conformation of the beach, they were shattered into a perfect world of snow, which again was furiously agitated, and flashed in a magnificent tumultuous play, in pyramids and cones and such shapes, until near the shore, where the shoaling ground forced the giddy tumblers into some regularity of swing, and they swept in dazzling ivory white volumes upon the beach, filling the air with a most indescribable and soul-subduing roaring noise. A curtain of slate-

coloured cloud was stretched across the heavens. I shaded my eyes and gazed fixedly at the boiling on the reef, but not a vestige of the yacht was to be seen. It was an awful thing to look upon that raging water, and not be able to see the merest relic of the brave, stout, beautiful fabric that had borne us so many hundreds of miles across the breast of the deep. My heart stopped still when I thought of our preservation, and of my own especially. I had not realized the desperate and breathless and thrilling wonder of it until I stood upon this little hill and looked down at that fearful sea. It made me raise my clasped hands and turn my face up to God. It was a speechless thanksgiving, for I made no prayer beyond what was in my face that I turned up in adoration, and with a heart full of tears.

I now put my back to the wind, to survey the island. How small it was you may guess when I tell you that even from the

little vantage ground I occupied I could view the sea nearly all around it. I believed at first it was the island of Little Inagua, and in that faith searched and searched in the south-west for signs of the coast of the greater island of that name, but I could see nothing. I then began to think it was too small for Little Inagua, nor was it conceivable that we should have been wrecked so far to the south as that island. As I might judge, the island was not above two miles from east to west, and a little more than a mile from north to south. It was a coral island, what is called a Cay in those parts, almost entirely flat, with a little bay in the south east, formed by the curvature of a piece of land that resembled in shape the hind leg of a horse when lifted. Here and there were groups of dwarf trees, nothing tropical in their appearance. About a pistol shot from the base of the hill was a mass of stunted vegetation that ran to the right and entirely covered the limb of land. Indeed,

this island was no more than a desert, inhospitable rock, scarcely more than a reef, without signs of any living creature upon it. Again and again I tried to penetrate the haze which the gale blew up out of the foaming sea, and which hung like a fog all around the horizon, in the hope of perceiving higher land, but in vain. As far as I could cast my eyes the ocean was a storming blank, and, for the solitude of it, this rock might have been in the middle of the great Pacific.

What was to be done? Here we were, cast away upon an island, without a boat, without any visible means of escape; surrounded by reefs, as was easily to be guessed from the appearance of the water, the very sight of which was like a death-warrant, since they were an assurance that no vessels would attempt the navigation of these waters, at least to approach this island near enough to see us. I battled hard with the feeling of consternation that seized me, but

I could not subdue it. How were we to support life? How were the women to be sheltered? How were we to make our situation known?

I stood staring around me, with a deep despair in my heart; but this wore off after a little, and I then quitted the hill and walked with difficulty against the heavy wind to the beach, where Tripshore and Hunter stood looking at the sea. The crashing of the breakers and the bellowing of the gale made conversation impossible here, so I motioned to the men to accompany me to the group of trees to one of which the yacht's warp still remained attached, and here we found some shelter.

I sat down, feeling very weak and trembling, and then seeing Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke looking our way, I invited them by a gesture to this shelter. Mrs. Stretton helped Carey to rise, and I was heartily rejoiced to see the poor girl capable of walking. Miss Tuke put her arm round

her uncle's neck and spoke to him. He looked in our direction, and then at the body of his wife, as though he would not leave it ; but on Norie speaking to him, he rose and came to us, helped along by Norie and his niece.

I did not know until afterwards that my poor friend had been very nearly drowned when the yacht went to pieces. He was midway along the rope when the vessel broke up, and the warp dropping into the sea, he fell with it, and had to be dragged ashore through the breakers. As I looked at him, and noted his hollow face, his hair wildly blowing, his long beard scattering like smoke upon his shirt-front, and his knees feebly yielding to his weight as he slowly advanced, leaning forwards to the gale, I thought of him as he stood to receive me at the *Lady Maud's* side in Southampton Water—how full of life and health he was then ; how hopefully he looked forward to this summer cruise ; how proudly he con-

ducted me over his vessel, and I recalled his tenderness and anxiety for his wife. There *she* lay, cold and senseless as the coral strand upon which the breakers were roaring in thunder. Her time had come, and she was at rest. But her motionless figure, painfully hidden by the rough jacket which Hunter had taken off his back to lay over her, was a most dreadful object for us in our distracted and miserable condition to have full in our sight; and when I looked from it to the halting figure of the husband as he came along, I was moved to a degree I have no words to express.

They led him to where I was seated, and he sunk down upon the ground. The others drew near, some of them sat, some stood. I broke the silence by saying:—

"There are eight of us living, and we must go to work now and think how we may prolong our lives, and ultimately save ourselves. I have been trying to discover other land near us, but the weather is too

thick to see any distance. Tripshore—Tom Hunter—have you any notion what part of the Bahamas this is?"

They both answered no.

"Let the island be what it will," I continued, "we cannot be far from inhabited land. We may take hope from that," said I, addressing the women.

"We ought to look for water, sir," exclaimed Tripshore.

"Yes," cried Norie, eagerly. "I am thirsty to death. The salt water I swallowed has left me intolerably parched."

"Will you help Tripshore to seek for water?" I asked.

"Willingly—but where are we to look for it?" he replied, casting his eyes about.

"Everywhere," said Tripshore bluntly.

"Try for a natural well, first," said I. "If that can't be found, there's a stretch of sand yonder. Dig into it with your hands, or with anything you can find knocking about, and you may come to fresh water."

"I have read that fresh water may be found sometimes by digging in the sand," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, in a feeble voice.

"Come, sir," said Tripshore to Norie ; and the two men marched off.

They had scarcely left us when I caught sight of what looked like a stretch of canvas, resembling an immense mass of seaweed, coiling over with the bend and fall of the breakers. It washed up the beach, but was swept back again, but I saw it would be stranded presently. It at once occurred to me that if we could secure that canvas we should be able to rig up a very tolerable shelter ; whereupon I called Hunter's attention to it, and told him to come with me and endeavour to drag the sail up the beach out of the breakers. He ran down to the beach before me, being much sounder and more active than I ; and watching his chance as the canvas was swept up, and the fore part of it stranded, he plunged as high as his knees into the whirl of recoiling foam,

and grasped the sail. By this time I had reached his side. We hauled together, and every breaker helping us, we managed to drag the sail out of the water. It proved to be the schooner's main gaff-topsail. It had most of its gear attached to it, particularly a length of halliards. We waited whilst the water drained out of it, and then seizing it afresh we dragged it towards the trees.

Sir Mordaunt had gone back to the body of his wife, and sat crouched alongside of it, exposed to the strong wind. This made me see the necessity of burying the corpse as soon as possible. But first it was necessary to furnish the women with some kind of shelter. So having got the sail among the trees we fell to work, Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton lending a hand. Hunter had a clasp knife in his pocket, and with this we cut away the gear, and divided it into lengths to serve as laniards. These laniards we hitched to the bolt-rope by making holes in the canvas, and then selecting a couple of trees for stanchions,

we rigged up a kind of tent, the windward side only (as the wind then blew) being protected, for the sail was not big enough to furnish us with four walls as well as a roof.

Rude and imperfect as this contrivance was, however, yet no sooner were the women inside than they felt the comfort of it. Had we been in dry clothes the wind might have seemed warm enough, but our garments being soaked to the skin gave the gale an edge of chilliness that kept the flesh shuddering. Hence this shelter from the wind was a very great comfort indeed. It took us but a short while to rig up the sail, nor could the wind demolish it, thanks to the trees, which broke the force of the gale, and supplied us with uprights as strong as rocks. When our work was completed I went to Sir Mordaunt, and by exerting a gentle force obliged him to come with me. I led him into a corner of the tent, and made him sit upon the grass, that was coarse and thick, but stunted like the trees, as if the blowing

of spray from the beach had checked its growth without killing it. I then whispered to Miss Tuke that we were going to remove the body of Lady Brookes, and begged her to stand in front of her uncle, under any pretence she could invent, so that he might not see what we were about.

"Are you going to bury her?" she exclaimed, with a look of mingled fright and grief.

"No, not before I consult Norie," I replied. "But we *must* remove the body out of the husband's sight. Pray conceal us, as I suggest, and talk to him. We shall not be long."

So saying, I quitted the tent, and motioning to Hunter, I told him to help me carry the body around the bend of the little hill, where it would be hidden, and where it might lie until we could manage to bury it. Approaching the body, we raised it reverently. The wet clothes made it a great weight, and, besides, she had been a fine, well-made woman, as I have told you. I took the

arms, letting the head lie against my breast, and as we raised her I looked at the tent and saw Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton both standing in front of Sir Mordaunt, and effectually concealing us. But after we had advanced a few paces, a violent gust of wind blew the jacket away and left the face exposed. Hunter had his back upon it, and was spared the sight, but I had it all the way, for I could not re-cover the face without laying the body down, which I would not do, lest Sir Mordaunt should catch sight of us, and follow.

We went round the base of the hill, and put the body down upon some grass at the margin of a stretch of deep and impervious bush, resembling the growths in Australia in respect of density, the greater portion of which was as high as my waist, though here and there it stood above my head. We laid the body down here, I say, and Hunter went back for the jacket, with which we covered the face, placing two stones upon the arms,

to prevent the jacket from blowing away ; and, this done, I ascended the bit of a hill, to look for Norie and Tripshore.

I saw them, when I had mounted a few feet, about a quarter of a mile distant, walking fast, and skirting the shrubbery, that extended, with a very clean, well-defined edge, athwart the island, as far as the horse-limb curve of land, as though human hands had planted it.

I shouted to them, and Tripshore waved his hand, and when they were within hearing distance the man hallooed out, "We have found water, sir !"

This was a joyful piece of news. It made my heart flutter, and filled me with as deep a transport as ever the intelligence that help was coming could have done.

"They have found water !" I bawled to Hunter, who stood at some distance from me.

He cried back, "Thanks to the Lord for it, sir ! We should all have been mad for a drink presently."

I then joined him, and whilst we stood waiting for the others, I asked him, having had no opportunity to do so before, how he had managed to save his life, and what had become of the other men. His story was very short and simple. When the yacht struck, all of the crew who were below rushed on deck. Pitch dark as it was, a number of men groped their way to what I have already called the long-boat. They managed to get her over, but how he could not explain, beyond implying that they worked like fiends in their terror, and launched her, he believed, by sheer force of muscle. Nobody thought of anything but saving his life. The belief was that the yacht would clear the reef and founder in the deep water beyond. (Note.—They believed it was a reef because they could not see the least signs of land.) Hunter knew that some men were drowning in the water to leeward of the deck, by the bubbling cries which came out of the darkness that way,

but it was impossible to help them. When the boat was over, they could see her plainly enough upon the foam, and the men jumped for her, some missing her, and vanishing alongside. Hunter jumped and reached her, but he could not tell me how many souls were in her: she was about half full, he thought. But scarcely had they shoved clear of the vessel when a sea took and capsized the boat, and then what followed was just a dream to him. He, being a good swimmer, struck out, not knowing where he was going, for he could see nothing but the white water; but after battling, he knew not how long, he was caught by the breakers and flung ashore, where he lay motionless, and almost lifeless, for a spell. When the dawn came he found himself alone, and the yacht on her beam ends on the reef, with the sea bursting in clouds over her after deck. He saw me standing in the companion, and then Tripshore, but he did not believe there were any more people alive

until he saw the rest of our party crowd into the bows. It was he, he said, who caught me by the hair when the breakers had flung me along; but he could not keep hold, and the water swept me back again. The next time he caught me by the arm, and held me until the breaker had spent itself, and then dragged me high and dry. Carey, he added, owed her life to Tripshore, who watched for her as he (Hunter) had watched for me, and managed to get her ashore the first time the sea threw her up. Hunter saved Norie in the same way, "and it was wonderful," said he, "how quiet the doctor" (for so Norie was called by the men) "took his bath. I lugged him out, and he was as fresh as a man swimming for to please himself. But Lady Brookes' gell was all but gone, sir. She was black in the face, and not a stir in her when Mr. Tripshore brought her out o' the wash yonder."

Norie and Tripshore now joined us. I at once inquired about the water.

"It's t'other side of the island, past them mangrove bushes," answered Tripshore, coming close to me, and pointing. "It's a made well, not a nat'ral one, an' it's in the sand. A couple o' casks, perhaps three, have been sunk, one atop of the other, and the one atop has been left standing as high as this," says he, holding his hand about two feet above the ground, "to prevent the sand from filling it up."

"Does it look a recent job?" I asked, anxiously.

"There's no telling, sir," he replied. "I take it to be the work of one of the wrecking vessels which used to knock about among these islands." *

"If that be so, then there may still be vessels which touch here," I exclaimed, with

* I have since ascertained that it was the practice of the small wrecking vessels which resorted to these islands to sink casks in the sand in order to obtain water. These casks were to be found in North Cat Cay, Sandy Cay, and many other islets in the neighbourhood of the Great Bahama Bank.

a swell of hope and elation in my heart.
"Is the water good?"

"It's rain water," answered Norie; "but good enough. It has quenched my thirst, which was just maddening."

"How did you get at it," I asked.

"I dipped with my shoe," he answered, for he had on a pair of low shoes. Then grasping my arm, he pointed to the grass alongside the bushes, and exclaimed, "What is that? Is that Lady Brookes' body?"

I told him it was, and explained my reason for bringing it to that place. He went to it, lifted up the jacket, and took a long look at the face, and then coming back, he said, "It will be best to bury her at once, Walton. It shocks me to think of her lying so."

"I was only waiting for you to see her," said I. "But how can we bury her?" and, turning to Hunter, I said, "Could you scoop up a grave for that body in the sand, with your hands?"

He answered yes ; it would be no trouble, he thought.

Upon this I asked Norie to help him carry the body round to the east side of the hill, where there was a stretch of sand, and where they could inter the corpse without being seen by Sir Mordaunt and the women. Norie answered that he would take care the body was properly buried, and after waiting until they had carried it to the spot I had indicated, I called to Tripshore, whom I required to pilot us to the well, and returned to the little tent.

As I walked, I glanced my eye along the beach, and noticed that several portions of wreckage were already thrown up ; and numerous black fragments were to be seen amid the white swirl, vanishing and re-appearing amid the roaring folds of the breakers and the further surges. But my thirst was too troublesome to suffer me to examine and secure the articles which the sea had washed ashore.

I entered the little tent briskly, and said, in as cheerful a voice as I could command, that a well of fresh water had been found, and I asked them to walk with me across the island to drink. Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton, who were seated near Sir Mordaunt, instantly got up, and Carey made an effort to rise. I told Tripshore to support her, and then extended my hand to the baronet, who reared himself with great difficulty and labour.

"Thank Heaven that water has been found," said he, in a voice so unlike his familiar tone, that had I not seen his lips move, I should not have believed it his. "God has not wholly forsaken us."

"Lean upon me," said I. "The distance is not great. We may think it advisable by-and-by to shift our quarters to the other side of the island. But first let us see what those breakers will give us of the wreck."

Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke walked first, followed by Carey, supported by Tripshore.

The mastiff followed in our wake. It was hard for Carey to have to walk to the well, but we had no vessel in which to bring water to her. When Sir Mordaunt, leaning on my arm, stepped forth from the trees, he looked and looked, and then stopped, and gripping me tightly, said, in a kind of gasp, "Where is Agnes? Where is the body? What have you done with it, Walton?"

"Oh, my dear friend," I answered, wrung to the very soul by the misery in his voice, "in the name of God, believe that what we do, we do for your sake."

He sobbed convulsively, but with dry eyes, and then muttering, "God's will be done! God's will be done!" which he repeated several times, he said no more, and we slowly followed the others.

To take his mind away from his grief, and to give him some hope, too, I spoke about the well that Norie and Tripshore had discovered; how its existence proved that the island had been visited; and how, therefore,

we need not despair of suffering a long captivity in this desolate spot of land. He did not, however, seem to heed me, but walked with his eyes fixed on the ground, and very often he weighed so heavily on my arm that I had some ado to bear up under him.

It still blew a heavy gale of wind, and the sea was shrouded with the haze of the flying spray. Away to the west of the island, the sea was running in enormous surges, and the roaring of the surf upon the beach on that side of the island was like a continuous roll of thunder, and the wind was full of a fine salt rain. The sky was one great cloud. I cannot express how desolate this shadow made the whole scene of snow-white storming ocean, and this little flat island, with its chilling and stunted herbage, and its groups of dwarf trees here and there, leaning all of them somewhat to the south-east, as though inclined by some strong prevailing wind. One gleam of sunshine, one flash of the glorious tropical luminary, would have

cheered our hearts ; but it was our fate that the terrible disaster that had overtaken us should be attended with many circumstances of horror. The very heavens scowled upon us, and the air howled with the maledictions of the pitiless gale.

The spot where the well was sunk was within a mile of the tent. The land, as I have said, was nearly entirely flat, and the greater portion of it, beyond the coral sand, covered with grass, which was rank and long only among the bushes and under the trees. Walking was very easy. Here and there the ground was encumbered with knobs, or projections of porous rock, as though the soil that covered the island was not everywhere deep enough to conceal its structure. As we advanced, a frigate pelican soared into the air, and struggled a minute or so with the gale, then dropped, and disappeared behind the bushes on the right. This was the only living thing I had yet seen on the island.

Tripshore led us straight to the well,

which I found sunk in the sand about a hundred paces above high-water mark. It was constructed just as he had described. First, the sand had been dug out until fresh water was reached ; then a cask with the ends knocked out had been sunk in the hole, and another cask placed on this, so as to raise a kind of coamings above the sand, to prevent the well from filling.

I bent my head over, and saw the water within reach of my arm, looking black, and my face reflected in it. We all stood around, and I said, "What shall we use for a dipper?"

Tripshore answered, "Mr. Norie used his shoe, sir."

"None of us wears shoes," said I, casting my eyes about, "so we shall have to use a boot." And I was going to remove one of mine, when Mrs. Stretton whipped off hers and handed it to me. We were too thirsty for ceremony, so I took the boot, filled it with water, and gave it to Miss Tuke, say-

ing that it was not the first time in history that a woman's shoe had served for a drinking cup. She passed it to Carey, who drank greedily. I filled the boot again and again, until we had all appeased our thirst. It was the salt water that had parched us, and Sir Mordaunt and Carey drank as if they could not quench their thirst.

Our situation came home to me with dreadful force whilst I stood watching them drink. Even had we all been men, the contrast of our lot now, greedily swallowing rainwater from a boot, standing—with white faces and wet clothes, some of us half dressed and with uncovered heads—round that sunk cask,—miserable shipwrecked people, imprisoned by a raging sea, with no prospect of relief before us that the most hopeful mind could imagine ; I say, even had we all been men, the contrast of our lot now with what it was aboard the *Lady Maud*, that luxurious floating home, with its hundred elegancies and comforts, would

have made a bitter thought. But that contrast was tenfold heightened by the presence of the women, and especially by Miss Tuke. If I was not in love with her, I will not say I was far off from loving her; and so soft was my heart for her, that I could not look at her sweet face without a degree of tenderness and grief that almost shames me to recall when I remember how much sympathy I had for her in comparison with what I had for the others, whose distress and sufferings were surely as great. Both she and Mrs. Stretton were fully dressed, having had time to clothe themselves whilst waiting for daylight in the *Lady Maud's* cabin. Carey was the worst off, having lost her hat and shawl in the water, and her dress being torn by the sea, as a squall splits a sail.

It worried me so much to see Sir Mordaunt without a coat, that I pulled off mine and begged him to wear it. He tried to get it on, but he was so much taller than I, and his shoulders proportionately broad,

that it would not fit him. I wondered that he should have left the yacht, half dressed, in that way, but I afterwards remembered that he had thrown off his coat before being hauled ashore.

All having drank, I held the boot full of water to the dog, who lapped it furiously, and when the noble animal was done, I dried the boot somewhat by swinging it to and fro. But it was no better than a piece of brown paper; so I sat down, pulled off my own boots, gave one of them to Mrs. Stretton to slip on, and thrusting the other into my pocket, offered Sir Mordaunt my arm, saying that the grass was as soft as a carpet, and that my socks would dry the quicker for being uncovered.

These are but trivial things to relate, but it is such things as these which make up the story of shipwreck. I never hear now of a yachting party sailing away on an ocean cruise, but that I wonder if they imagine what shipwreck means, what being cast

away, stripped of every luxury they have been used to, forced to confront the naked heavens without a shelter to protect them from the roasting sun or the blinding rain or the furious gale, signify ? Death is not the worst part of the horrors of such an experience. You hear of protracted anguish ending in madness ; you hear of starvation terminating in cannibalism ; you hear of hardships and physical suffering converting the comeliest man into such an object of horror, that those whom God sends to succour him at last recoil with affright from the monstrous and unnatural appearance. To be shipwrecked is a terrible thing indeed ; how terrible, no man can tell save he who has suffered it.

On our return we met Hunter going to the well for a drink. He asked me the road. I pointed to the well, and told him he would have to make a cup of his hands or use his boot.

"Where is Norie ?" Sir Mordaunt asked

me ; and I thought he seemed to notice for the first time that Norie and Hunter had not accompanied us to the well. I made some answer, I forget what. He looked at me eagerly, and with great trouble in his eyes, but asked no more questions.

On our arrival at the tent Mrs. Stretton gave me back my boot ; but I was not afraid of bare feet, so I pulled off my sock and rolled up my trousers, saying with a laugh that I should not be afraid of spoiling my boots now. We found Norie in the tent, sitting, and leaning his hand on his arm. He looked as if all the hope had been crushed out of him. He was like a prisoner in a cell, haggard and shocked, and full of amazement and fear. He glanced from one to the other of us as we entered, and cried, "Don't let any one of you be alone if you can help it ! You cannot guess what solitude is here ! I have had about five minutes of it, and feel as if another five minutes would drive me out of my mind.

The wind howls horribly through these trees !
And, my God ! did ever any sea roar like
yonder waves ?"

"Pray don't afflict us with reflections of
that kind, Norie," I exclaimed, warmly.
"Give Sir Mordaunt your place there, and
come you along to the beach with Tripshore
and me, and lend us a hand to collect the
things which have been washed ashore."

He jumped up, but as he did so Sir Mordaunt gave a little cry. I looked at him, and saw that his eyes were fixed upon the jacket that had covered the face of his wife. Norie had brought it away, and had been lying on it.

"Where is her body ?" asked the baronet, addressing Norie.

It was idle to keep the matter from him, so, meeting the doctor's glance, I dropped my head.

"We have buried her," said Norie.

"It was my wish," said I, seizing Sir Mordaunt's hand.

"Oh, but without a prayer—without one last look!" he cried, in a quivering voice.

"Don't say without a prayer," exclaimed Norie. "The seaman who helped me will tell you differently."

Sir Mordaunt took his hand from mine to cover his face, on which Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke went to him and began to comfort him, talking as gentle and pitying women can to a man in grief. They could do better than I or Norie. I therefore beckoned to the doctor, and we trudged down to the beach, where Tripshore was bending over some object that had been thrown up by the waves.

"For heaven's sake, Norie," said I, as we went along, "don't indulge in any dismal reflections before the women. Keep up their hearts if you can. Bad as our lot is, it might be worse. This island is *terra firma*, any way. We have found water, and now we must look for something to eat. It is much too soon to cave in, man. You ought to know that."

"Ay," he exclaimed. "But to be alone for even five minutes after burying that poor woman. . . . I thought my hospital work had cured me of all weakness; but the sweat poured from me when I put the body in the sand, dressed as it was, Walton! God preserve me! It seemed frightfully heartless to cover the face that I knew so well with the sand!"

He shuddered violently, and I own I shuddered too. He was fresh from a sad and shocking job indeed, and I was sorry I had spoken to him so warmly in the tent.

"But I *did* offer up a prayer, Walton," he added, with a singular and affecting simplicity of manner. "It was no falsehood I told Sir Mordaunt. I made a little prayer whilst Hunter filled up the hole we had scooped out."

By this time we were close to Tripshore.

"What have you there?" I called to him.

He shouted back, for the roar of the surf was deafening, "The carpenter's chest, sir."

This indeed it was. It was fitted with a shelf midway the height inside. All the tools which had been on top of this shelf were gone; but on dragging up the shelf, which lay jammed in the box like a cork in the neck of a bottle, we found the bottom full of nails of all sorts, some half as long as my arm, together with a saw, a chopper, fashioned to serve as a hammer too, and three sailors' sheath-knives.

"We shall find these things useful," said I, "so let us drag the chest clear of all risk from the breakers."

We laid hold of it and hauled it up the beach, then returned, and in ten minutes time collected the following articles:—

The tell-tale compass, with a portion of the beam to which it had been screwed; two wooden cases, presently to be opened; a small cask, very heavy; a large kettle, the lid of which was gone and the spout warped;

three spare sails ; and a mass of the yacht's planks and timbers. We saved all the wood we could find, with the idea of building a hut for the women to lie in that night. We likewise searched the beach, down into the very fork of the tiny bay in the south-east corner, where the water was tolerably smooth, owing to the shelter of the limb of land I have described, and found a quantity of timber, but nothing more to our purpose.

On opening the head of the cask, I found to my joy that it was full of salt beef, and, what was equally gladdening, the two cases contained each of them three dozens of tins of different kinds of preserved meats, which had been shipped for cabin use. This you may be sure we reckoned a noble discovery, for here was food ready cooked for us to eat. Forthwith we laid hold of the cases and carried them up to the tent.

"Here are the materials for two, and perhaps three, meals a day for nine days," I

cried, addressing the inmates generally, "allowing each person a tin. Tripshore, go and fetch those sailors' knives. We shall all feel the better for a breakfast."

The man brought the knives, and we opened a couple of the tins, using a piece of deck-plank for a table. I divided the contents of the first tin into eight portions, and I made the same division of the meat in the second tin. Had we had bread or biscuit, or anything of that kind to eat with this preserved food, the portions would have made a fair meal. As it was, each person's share could be despatched in a few bites. But I would not open any more tins at that sitting. I had only to consider how absolutely destitute was this island of all sustenance fit for human beings, and how days and nights might pass without bringing us any help, to understand the preciousness of the food that had been cast up by the sea. Not one of our little company but appreciated my reason for opening no more tins ;

but the dread of giving expression to that reason was too great to suffer any of them to speak of it.

As the piece of plank went around, with the eight portions upon it, each one took his or her share, and Hunter, arriving at that moment from the well, took his; and there we sat, the eight of us, close packed together under the sail.

Suddenly Miss Tuke said, "You have forgotten the dog, Mr. Walton."

I looked around, and saw the poor fellow lying on the grass, watching us eating with a passionate longing eye. I jumped up and ran down to the cask of beef and cut off a hunch of meat, which I threw to him. He wagged his tail, and thanked me in his dumb way, and was presently happy, gnawing upon the piece of junk.

The gale still stormed violently over the island, and the sky resembled a vast sheet of lead, with a kind of brown smoke-like scud driving along under it, and scattering,

just as smoke scatters, as it went. We were close to the sea, and had the roar of the surf in our ears. The gloom of the heavens and the bellowing and crashing of the sea would have been depressing even had all been well with us. The trees made a shadow, and the sail stretched over us deepened it, and in this shadow we sat, holding our little portions of preserved meat in our fingers, and all of us, acting upon my advice, eating very slowly; for I remembered a sailor who had been adrift for a week in an open boat telling me that by munching and munching the tiny piece of ship's bread that he was allowed twice a day, by keeping it in his mouth, and then swallowing it slowly, he made it appease his hunger, whereas when he eat it hastily it left him still famine-stricken.

Never did shipwreck create a more dismal group of human beings than we looked as we sat peering at one another in the gloom under the sail. Nor, in my opinion, did life ever establish a sharper contrast in so

short a time. You are affected when a poor, hungry, shabby man is pointed out to you as one who so many years ago possessed a fortune and lived in grand style. But here were we, who only a few short hours ago enjoyed all the luxuries of a superbly appointed yacht, flung half-naked upon a desolate island, forced to squat and eat our food like savages, treasuring that poor food and valuing it at a price which the whole of the island made of gold would not have paid for; and already having proved that we had gauged deep all the horror and wretchedness of shipwreck by the exultation which the discovery of a little well of rain-water had inspired in us!

It was distracting to sit still and think upon our misfortunes. I got up from the grass and looked at the sea, to find out if any more wreckage had come ashore; and then addressing Tripshore and Hunter, I said that we were well into the day, and ought to go to work at once, and rig up

a better habitation than the one over us, whilst we had the light. Yonder was plenty of wood, and we had a saw, a hammer, abundance of nails, and sailcloth. But first, on which side of the island should we construct the hut? Here, among the trees and near the beach, where we should see all that came ashore from the wreck? or over there among that clump of trees to the left of the bush, where we should be within three minutes' walk of the well?

Hunter was for crossing the island, Tripshore for stopping where we were. I asked Sir Mordaunt, who said he was for stopping; so that decided us. He wanted to come out and help us, but I swore I would not lift a finger if he quitted the shelter, as he was in no condition to work; and, moreover, I said there were enough of us and to spare.

So we left him with the women; and the four of us, that is, Norie, the seamen, and I, went down to the beach and brought up the fragments of wreck to the trees, where

we presently had a great pile of deck-planking, and portions of the skin of the vessel, and other parts of her; for she had gone to pieces, I may say, as a house falls in. She had been ground into fragments by the great sea that had beaten her down upon the jagged, iron-hard reef. We then brought the tool-chest along, and set to work to nail the wreckage to the trees. This took us a long time, for we had but one hammer; but happily some of the deck-planking had been thrown up in middling big pieces—that is, there would be three or four planks nailed together—and this enabled us to push forward with our job.

It did us good to work. It kept us from pining and brooding over our troubles; and the baronet and the women watched us from the shelter of their tent, for, as I have said, it was open on both sides, and the trees we selected as uprights for our hut were to the right. We had no means of keeping a reckoning of time. I was the only one of

the party who had a watch, and it had stopped when I was in the water. We had no sun to guess the hour by ; but I supposed it would be about three o'clock by the time we had fairly framed in a group of trees, forming an enclosure that might be nearly twelve feet by ten and about six feet in height.

We broke off when we had got so far, and sent Hunter with the kettle to the well, and divided the contents of another tin of meat ; but neither Miss Tuke nor Mrs. Stretton would take her portion. They said they were not hungry, that they could not eat, so I laid their shares aside ; and the filled kettle—for it was a large vessel—serving to give us a good drink all round, we fell to work with renewed energy to roof in our strange structure with the sails. This was not an easy task, for the trees in the middle of the hut were in the way. However, we managed it by cutting the cloths so as to let the trees come into them. One

sail was enough to make a roof. It was, indeed, a spare fore-topsail, and by means of laniards we triced it as taut as a drum-skin. To make the shelter more complete, we passed another sail round the hut outside as far as it would stretch. We then unbent the sail that had served us as a tent, and that by this time was thoroughly dry, and spread it over the floor of the hut as a carpet. And not yet satisfied, I made Tripshore help me to cut up the remaining sail, which we nailed to the trees inside in such a manner that one part of the interior was entirely screened. This space I meant for the women to sleep in.

We had scarcely finished, and were looking about us to see what more could be done, when the interior of our little shelter grew bright, and stepping outside, I saw the sun flashing with a watery-reddish brilliance in the west. The great leaden cloud that had heavily overhung us all day was broken up into masses of dark vapour, which

were solemnly journeying across the sky, and here and there among them were glimpses of misty blue. The horizon was clear, the gale had broken and was falling, but the ocean was still a wild, tumultuous, leaping, and rushing surface, of a silver and splendid brilliancy of creaming white under the sun, and from the reef to the beach the water resembled hurling volumes of snow.

That beam of reddish sunshine fell upon my heart like a blessing. I stood with clasped hands gazing at it with a rapture I have no words for, and presently turning to call the others, I found them all looking; ay, the very dog stood there looking at the sun. The glorious light sparkled in the eyes of the women, and I saw Ada Tuke gazing with such an expression in her face as a shipwrecked sailor wears when he watches a vessel coming his way.

"Praise God for that encouragement!" I cried, pointing to the sun. "It is meant to give us hope."

"There's another cask come ashore, sir!" shouted Tripshore, and he and I and Hunter dashed down to the beach.

I overhauled the marks upon it, and sung out, "It's either brandy or sherry. Roll it up, boys, to the hut, and we'll test it there."

It was full, and we had a hard job to get it along. Sir Mordaunt said it was sherry; but, valuable as it was, I would have given twenty such casks for one of biscuit.

I felt greatly fatigued after the hard work, and harder excitement and emotions of the day, and went to rest myself in the hut. Carey lay dozing on the sail. Sir Mordaunt joined me, leaving the others outside. The sight of the sun and the breaking clouds had heartened my poor friend somewhat. There was a little more life in him, I mean, and his heart seemed a bit eased of that oppression of grief which had been in his face during the day.

He came and sat down alongside of me,

and, clasping my hand, looked at me without speaking for some moments.

"Oh, Walton," he presently exclaimed. "This is a bitter and cruel termination of our cruise. My conscience accuses me as the author of all this misery. It was my blind confidence in Purchase that has led to this."

"Nay, don't fret over these matters," said I. "What we have to do is to get away from this island."

"All this privation," he continued, "ay, months of exile and suffering here, I could have borne without a murmur, if my poor wife had been preserved. But to think of her being dead—killed, indeed, by those very efforts I had made to restore her to health——" He broke off, and lifted up his hands with a gesture of speechless grief.

I said all that I could to soothe him, and talked to some purpose, for he calmed down after a little, and when I spoke of our situation he listened attentively. I told him I

could not imagine upon what part of the Bahamas we were wrecked. "There can be no doubt whatever," said I, "that Purchase was miles out of his reckoning—I mean without reference to his false estimate of our drift to the westward. Unhappily, I have no knowledge of these seas, but I know that some of the larger islands are populated, and I do not suppose that we can be very far distant from one of the inhabited islands."

"But what means have we of leaving this place?" said he. "We have no boat. I see no chance of deliverance unless a vessel should come near."

"That is certainly our outlook at the present moment," I replied; "but we need not despair. You may read of extraordinary things having been done by people in our position; and some among us, Sir Mordaunt, are not men to sit down and wait for an opportunity to come."

"God knows, Walton, what we should

have done without you," said he ; and he was proceeding, when I stopped him by saying that before it fell dark I would ascend the little hill and have a look around for land. He said he would go too ; he had not seen the island, and would like to view it from that point.

"Let us all go," said I ; "for one may have sharper eyes than the rest."

So we left the hut, and I asked Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton to join us. I also called to Norie and the seamen, and the whole company of us started for the hill, leaving Carey dozing in the hut, and the dog to keep watch beside her.

(Note here, that Mrs. Stretton's boot that we had used as a cup being still wet, she put on my boot for this walk ; and I took notice of the very elegant shape of her foot as she leaned against a tree in order to put on the boot.)

I walked in advance with Miss Tuke, and though the road was a short one, we managed

to say a great deal. She spoke of her aunt, and asked where she was buried. On my telling her, she exclaimed, "I believe she would not have lived many hours in this island. The grief and terror would have killed her. She could not endure pain or hardship. And perhaps she may prove to be the luckiest of us all," she added, in a tremulous voice.

"Don't talk like that yet," said I. "There are too many chances in our favour to make such fancies reasonable. Besides, you are our heroine. We all look up to you when our spirits are low."

She shook her head at this.

"I wish I could see you in comfortable dry clothes," said I. "If we could only manage to make a fire, we would soon dry our clothes."

"Don't think of me more than of yourself and the others," she answered. "Of all of us, poor Mrs. Stretton is most to be pitied. This is her second shipwreck in a very

short time, and when I recall what she went through on that half-sunk wreck, I cannot help thinking that we are very well off."

"That's well said."

"She is a most gentle, womanly creature," she continued. "I am sure her sympathy soothed Uncle Mordaunt. Each of them has been similarly bereaved, and what she said to him carried a weight that no words of mine could have taken."

We gained the top of the little hill. The windward sky was clearing fast, and the blue of it was growing pure. No more than a fresh breeze was now blowing, and I reckoned that it would all be gone by sunset. The circumference of the deep lay open to us, saving one small part blocked out by trees in the north-west. We searched the circle narrowly, but, good as my sight was, I at all events could perceive nothing but the water.

"How far should we be able to see from this height, sir?" inquired Hunter.

"About fourteen or fifteen miles in clear weather," I answered.

"Isn't that land out there?" exclaimed Mrs. Stretton, crossing to my side, and pointing to the right of the track of the sun.

I gazed and gazed. Suddenly Miss Tuke cried, "Yes! there is a little film there—a tiny blue shadow—I see it plainly."

"Right you are, Miss," said Tripshore. "There it is, Mr. Walton!"

I thought I saw it, but when I shut my eyes to clear them, and looked again, it was gone. None of the rest of our party could see the tiny shadow, which made those who saw it wonder, for they said it stood there plain enough. I took for granted that it was land, and asked Tripshore if his memory carried the chart sharply enough to recall what island would have land bearing in that direction from it, visible, say, about twenty miles? He puzzled and reflected, and knit his brows, but the poor fellow could not re-

member. Indeed, it was not a thing to be guessed. If you look at the Bahama Islands, you will see how crowded the chart is with rocks and cays and reefs and islets, similar to the one on which we had been cast. It was idle to recall Purchase's reckoning, for I knew that we were much further to the west than that, and much further to the south too, I was sure. But there was no use speculating upon that shadow which Miss Tuke and the other two saw. If it were land, we should never be able to find out what land it was by guessing. Elsewhere the horizon was quite bare.

"But so much the better," said I, gazing into the east; "for if that water out yonder is clear, surely there will be vessels traversing it, bound to or from Providence Channel or the Florida and North Carolina coasts to the West India Islands. Don't you think so, Tripshore?"

"I do, sir. Anyhow, the chance is good enough to make a look-out a necessity. If

we could raise a flare, something might come of it when it falls dark."

"But how are we to get a light?" I asked. "Who has any matches?"

The men felt about their pockets, but to no purpose. Sailors seldom carry lights; the galley-fire is their lucifer-match. We all searched, but none of us had any matches, nor the means of procuring fire.

"Something to make fire may come ashore in the night," said Hunter. "'There's no use despairin'."

Still it was terribly vexing to be without fire. There were many reasons why a flare would have been good for us. We could have dried our clothes; we could have cooked the salt beef in the kettle; it would have made a cheerful light, too, something to keep watch by; above all, we should never be able to guess what it would be doing for us—what passing distant vessel it might attract, that would lay-to and wait for the morning, to run down to us, the mere dream

of which would have acted like a cordial upon our spirits. The want of fire was the harder to bear because the bush promised excellent fuel, and with our knives we could have gathered enough to last us through the night. Norie spoke of rubbing sticks together. I told him that read very well in books, that no doubt there were savage tribes who got fire in that way, though they must be artists to do it, and have the right kind of wood too.

"But you might try it, if you will, Norie," said I.

(He did try that same night. He got a couple of pieces of wood, and rubbed until the sweat ran down him like water. But so far from catching fire, the wood was scarcely warm, though he had worked like a horse.)

After lingering a while on the hill, looking at the sea, and watching the red sunlight wax and wane as the clouds rolled over the setting orb, we went slowly towards the hut.

I was determined to do my best to keep up the spirits of the people, and made some of them smile by suggesting that we should take a drink of the sherry out of the kettle.

"It's too good to dip a boot into," said I. "Besides, I couldn't fancy sherry out of a boot—not even out of Mrs. Stretton's boot, small as it is."

"But you won't dip that great black kettle into the wine?" said Miss Tuke, with a laugh, that made us all seem to forget our troubles for the moment.

"No; but if we could manage to bale some of it into the kettle," I answered, "we could each of us take a pull at the spout."

Here Hunter walked off to the beach, to look, as I supposed, for any articles that might have come ashore. I told Tripshore to open a couple of tins of meat, whilst I and Norie worked at the cask of wine; and whilst we were full of this business, comes back Hunter with a big shell in

his hand, and gives it to me with a face of triumph.

"There's a baler for ye, sir—the biggest I could find in this light," says he. "Mr. Tripshore, there's a box away down in the cove" (meaning the little creek at the end of the beach). "Will you come along and help to bring it up?"

"Save all that you can," said I; and away went the two men.

Having got the head of the wine-cask open, I dipped the shell into the sherry, and handed it to Mrs. Stretton. It held near upon a gill. It was better than drinking out of the kettle, and I admired Hunter's readiness. Pretty it was to see the women drinking the wine from the shell, that was deeper than an oyster shell, yet of that shape, thickly ribbed, and each rib defined by a red line. I filled the shell for Carey, and then handed it to the baronet, to help himself and pass it on, whilst I divided the meat into portions, as before.

It was a wretched meal, not enough for us by I know not how much ; and I bitterly deplored the want of a little biscuit to distribute with it, or such fruit as any man might have hoped to find on a tropical island, where there was soil enough to give life to bushes and trees.

I felt desperately low-spirited whilst dividing the poor repast. I kept on thinking, "What in God's name shall we do if we are not succoured before our slender provisions are exhausted ?" But the arrival of Tripshore and Hunter with the box took me away from these melancholy thoughts, and I went out to inspect the new acquisition. As I approached it, Tripshore sidled up to me, and whispered in my ear, "There's two dead bodies come ashore, sir. One's the cook, and t'other's poor Jim Wilkinson. Better say nothen about it. Me and Tom'll steal away presently, and bury 'em."

I nodded, and began to handle the box.

"Why, Carey, is not this yours ?" exclaimed Miss Tuke.

The girl looked, and said yes, it was her box.

"It is locked," said I. "Have you the key?"

She fumbled in her pocket, or rather in the hole where the pocket should have been; but the sea had torn that convenience away.

"You can break it open, sir," said the poor girl, simply. "I know what's in it."

I broke the lock with the chopper, and told her to explore the contents, as for all we knew it might contain something that should prove of great value to us. She came readily, and kneeled down, and began to take the articles out of the box, whilst we stood around. The hope I had that among the contents there might be a box of matches was soon dashed. The box, though well made, and a good box of its kind, was full of water, and the things lay soaking in it, like clothes in a washtub. Among the contents I remember were an old-fashioned Prayer-book, a work-box completely fitted,

some dresses, a hat, some under-linen, a pair of boots, a bundle of letters, which flaked away in Carey's hand when she fished them up, and the sight of which made her cry bitterly. We stretched the wearing apparel upon the grass to dry, and then, whilst the others went to get their mouthful of supper, I cut off another piece of junk for the dog, and got the kettle ready for Hunter to fill it when he had done his meal.

CHAPTER II.

By this time the sun was very low, the wind almost gone, the sea rapidly calming, and every promise of a fine bright night in the sky. After Hunter returned with the kettle from the well, he followed Tripshore down into the creek, where they buried the two bodies in the sand. Before they came back the sun had vanished, and the night had closed upon the sea ; but happily for us, who were without artificial light, there was a bright moon in the south-west, which, though only half the orb was visible, flashed a silver glory upon the water, and was strong enough to give sharp black shadows to the trees.

When Tripshore returned, he held out

some object to me, which, on first viewing it in his hands, I had taken to be a piece of spar ; but it proved to be one of the telescopes belonging to the *Lady Maud*, the one that had stood on brackets in the after-companion. He whispered to me that he had found it close against the body of Jim Wilkinson.

This was a grand discovery, though its most significant value did not immediately occur to me. All that I thought of was how useful it would be to search the horizon with, and examine the coast, which Mrs. Stretton was the first to see. I called to Sir Mordaunt that Tripshore had found one of the telescopes, and everybody came running to look at it, whilst I sat down to unscrew the lenses and dry them ; which done, I pointed the glass at the moon, and was overjoyed to discover that the sea had done no injury whatever to the telescope.

"Can you see through it all right, sir ?" inquired Tripshore.

"Ay," said I. "Look for yourself."

But instead of putting the glass to his eye, he stood like a man musing, and then said, "Can't ye guess a fine use for this glass, Mr. Walton, in the day time, when the sky's clear?"

"What do you mean, Tripshore?" said I.

"Why," said he, "here's a toober full o' burning glasses. When the sun's up, you'll want no lucifer-matches. You'll get fire and to spare with e'er a one of them magnifiers."

I had not thought of this; but it made the glass so precious, that in my delight at possessing it I grasped Tripshore by the hand, and gripped it—rather too cordially, I remember, for when I let go, the poor fellow turned his back upon me, in order to chafe away the pain of the squeeze.

But the dew was falling very heavily, and the night air had that peculiar chilliness which any man who knows those latitudes will recall. Our damp clothes rendered us

very sensitive to the swift change of temperature. I advised Sir Mordaunt and the women to enter the hut, and take their rest for the night. But first the baronet asked us to join him in a prayer. We readily assented, and knelt in a circle, Sir Mordaunt kneeling in the midst of us. Of all moving moments, I never experienced the like of that short time in which we knelt, whilst my poor friend prayed aloud. Our knowing the agony of mind his wife's death caused him, made us find such a pathos in every tone of his, as none of us could hear without dim eyes. He struggled hard to steady his voice whilst he offered up thanks for our merciful salvation, and implored God's continued protection of the lives He had preserved. But he would pray for his wife too, which taxed him beyond endurance, for he utterly broke down at that part of his prayer, and sobbed so lamentably that it seemed he must break his heart.

When he had recovered his composure,

I urged the women to withdraw to their part of the hut, and gave them some pieces of canvas to use for coverlets. I then rolled up a short breadth of the side of the sail that we had spread upon the grass to serve as a pillow, and made Sir Mordaunt put his head upon it; and when he was laid down I covered his shoulders with Hunter's jacket—I mean the jacket that had covered his wife's face. Norie lay down beside him, and the dog crouched at their feet.

It was quite dark in the hut, but the white sail spread in the bottom of it made a kind of glimmer, and helped us somewhat. I went into the open with the two seamen, and though I was reluctant to keep them standing and talking after the sufferings and labour of the day, I could not forbear to call a council of them now that all was still, the peace and the radiance of the night upon us, the wind gone, and nothing to distract our minds from close contemplation of our position.

First, I told them that it was necessary we should keep watch. Although we had no means of signalling a passing vessel, yet it would be a thousand pities if one should pass when we were asleep. For what we desired to know was, was this part of the sea navigable? and did vessels ever traverse it within sight of the island? If we could be sure on this head our hopes would gain strength, and we should have good reason for making a smoke in the day and burning a flare at night.

"Ay, sir, a look-out must be kept," said Tripshore.

"There are three of us," said I.

"But how'll the man on duty know when his watch is up?" inquired Hunter.

This was a poser; for, as I have told you, we were without the means of calculating the passage of time. At last I said—

"We must do the best we can by guessing. The moon will help us for a spell. If we make a three hours' watch, each man

will get some hours' rest. We must reckon how the time goes as best we can."

They were very willing, they said; and so that matter was settled, and it was agreed that I should keep the first look-out.

"And now," said I, "how are we to get away from this island? Our stock of food is very small, though more may wash ashore. But let as much as may come, it will not last eight men and women long; and we're bound to starve if we stop here."

"There's only one thing to be done," said Hunter. "We must turn to and build a raft—something that'll float—with a life-line around it, and likewise a mast. We must make the best job we can—something that'll steer—and one or two of us 'll have to go adrift in it, and take our chance of bein' picked up, and getting the wessel as picks us up to call for the others."

I shook my head. "If," said I, "we could be sure that the land some of you

have seen was inhabited, why then, though it should be fifty miles distant, one or two of us, as you say, Hunter, might venture for it on a raft. But to risk our lives, merely to be stranded on such another rock as this, would be a mad thing. You'll get no raft to do more than swoosh along straight with the wind, and I see no good to come of going adrift, with the certain chance of being blown away to sea, and either foundering or dying of want."

"You're right, sir," said Tripshore, gravely. "A raft 'ud be sartin death, Tom."

"But it's sartin death if we stop here too!" exclaimed Hunter. "Though a raft 'ud give us a poor chance, it 'ud still be a chance; but this blooming island gives us no chance at all."

"Why not rig up a raft—a dummy—a small 'un, with a mast and sail, and a board at the masthead wrote on to signify that there are eight shipwrecked persons aboard this island, and send it adrift, with the

chance of some wessel overhauling it?" exclaimed Tripshore.

The idea was original and striking. I said at once—

"Yes, we can do that. It shall be our first job in the morning. With a cloth or two of canvas set square on a well-stayed mast, a raft is bound to blow along; and if our chance lies in her being seen by a vessel, then she'll answer our purpose better than if she were manned, for she'll risk no lives."

Hunter turned his head, and, looking towards the beach, said, in a low voice, "Would it be a bad job to lash one of them dead bodies in the sand yonder to it? She'd make a likelier arrand for us with a body aboard than if she went naked. A ship 'ud stop if they sighted a body, but if they saw northen on the raft, maybe they'd pass on without heeding the board at the masthead."

The suggestion offended me for a moment,

but only for a moment. What Hunter had said was perfectly true. A body on the raft would twenty-fold increase our chance, by inducing a vessel to approach it, whereas if the people of the vessel saw only a bare raft, they might pass on. What would it matter to the dead, whether he was left in the sand there, or sent adrift to find a grave in the bottom of the deep? Life was dearer to us than sentiment. We must be succoured or we must perish. A dead man would make a ghastly messenger, but we should send him forth in God's name; and whether he should be swept away or be encountered by a ship, he was sure of ultimately finding a resting-place in the sea.

We stood talking briskly a full ten minutes over this scheme, and then, there being nothing more to say, I told the men to turn in, but first to take a sup of sherry. This they did, and entered the hut, and I was left alone.

As I had foreseen, the wind had died

away with the sun. I could feel only the lightest current of air. Here and there a white cloud floated, scarcely moving athwart the stars, and some of them carrying delicate and phantom-like rainbows in the parts they turned to the moon. Some of the stars were very large and beautiful, and the deep, unspeakable, velvet-dark depths of the heavens seemed tremulous with the incessant showering of meteors. There was still a heavy swell rolling along the path of the vanished gale, and as these majestic and foamless coils of ebony water passed under the moon, they flashed into mountains of quicksilver. The reef hindered the run of these rollers on our side of the island, but there was surf enough along the beach to fill the night with a most lamentable moaning noise. It was as though the sea in mockery gave our misery a voice. It was a most depressing sound to stand and idly listen to, and cruelly brought home to me our desolate condition, and our lonely

and helpless plight in the midst of this dark water, with its sullen rollers and its lamenting voice wailing close at our ears.

As I looked at the moon and the peaceful sky, I thought with bitterness that had such a night as this come to us twenty-four hours sooner, the *Lady Maud* would still have been afloat. I pictured how her decks would have shown, and imagined Lady Brookes in her invalid's chair near the skylight, and Ada Tuke flitting from one side of the deck to the other in the moonlight, and Sir Mordaunt pacing to and fro, and so on, and so on. I say I stood dreaming forth a whole picture of the schooner as she would have appeared on such a night as this, until I broke away with a shudder from the dreadful contrast of our position, and walked down to the beach, in the hope of distracting my mind in a hunt after more relics of the wreck.

The tide was lower by many feet down the beach, and though I could not see the

reef on which the yacht had struck, yet I guessed, by the play of white water there, that when the sea was calm at low tide the reef would be visible. There was a dark object almost abreast of the hut upon the gleaming coral sand, and on approaching it I discovered it to be a full cask, but what it contained I could not tell. There could be no doubt, however, from its appearance, that it held provisions of some sort. so I set to work to clear away the sand that buried it by about a foot and a half, and tumbling it on its bilge, I managed to roll it some distance above high-water mark, where it would be safe from the sea.

I returned again close to the surf, and slowly followed the line of it as it trended away to the north-east and then into the south-east, where it terminated in the bight of the limb of land. The moon shone brilliantly, and I could see very plainly. Presently, and at about three hundred paces from the spot where I had found the cask,

I saw a square black object in the water, which covered and exposed it as the rollers came in and ran back. I was much puzzled to know what it could be, until, after looking for some time, I perceived that it was the yacht's piano !

A little further on was a pile of fragments of timber high and dry ; and just beyond again was a spare fore-topmast, and the yacht's fore-top-gallant and topsail yards, the sails bent and the gaskets holding tight. These, it will be remembered, had been sent down during the gale. I thought that we might come to require those spars, but they were too heavy for me to drag up the beach ; so, after having carried a quantity of timber up the shore, I went to the trees where the hut stood, and hauled in the line by which Sir Mordaunt and the others had been dragged from the yacht, and which had parted close to the vessel when she went to pieces. With this end of stuff I returned to the spars, hitched the

line round them, and made the end fast up the beach, so that the tide should not carry them away.

All this was very hard work, but not to be neglected. I was tired, and was going to sit down, when I spied a dead body on the sand about fifty yards this side of where the beach terminated in the creek. It lay on its back, with its arms out, and its head on its right shoulder, in the very posture of a crucified figure. I recognized it as a man named Martin Jewell, a young man, in life fresh-faced and smiling, and a very willing sailor. He looked to be asleep, so easy was the appearance of his face in the moonlight, though his eyes were open. I know not why his quiet look should have made me think this dead man frightful ; but I should have been less shocked and scared had he presented the usual dreadful appearance of the drowned. Maybe, it was my knowing him to be stone-dead, and his looking lifelike and sleeping, that made me

recoil and tremble. And you must add the surroundings, too : the breezeless atmosphere, the moaning of the sea, the steady white fires of the moon upon the water, the swell sparkling like silver as it ran across the wake of the orb, the large stars looking down, with the shining dust of meteors quivering and fading among them. I say, figure this scene, and then think of the stirless dead body lying like a dreaming man, looking straight up at the sky, as though he followed the flight of his spirit.

I shook off the feelings which possessed me, and fetching a piece of jagged plank from the pile beyond, I dug a hole in the sand, which occupied me about ten minutes ; but when I tried to put down the outstretched arms of the body, I found they would not yield. So I had to dig afresh and turn out two grooves, if I may so say, to receive the arms ; and then I laid him in his grave, in the very posture in

which he had died, with his arms stretched above his head, and so covered him over.

This miserable and sad duty discharged, I walked languidly towards the hillock, meaning to rest on top of it, where I should command the sea. Having reached the summit, I threw myself down and ran my eye over the sea ; but though there had been a ship a mile off in the south or west, I believe I should not have seen her, owing to the confusing light of the moon and the play of the swell, that perplexed the eye with alternations of radiance and shadow. I carefully looked along the horizon, but could see nothing but the sea and the stars in the north and east, and the flashing moonlight in the other quarters. Here I sat for hard upon half an hour, when, feeling drowsy, and afraid of falling asleep, which would have been a bad thing for me in the heavy dew, I got up and walked across the top of the little hill, as far as the incline that faced in the direction of the well.

Whilst I stood looking towards the sea in the north, my eye was caught by an object at the bottom of the declivity close against the bushes. I could just make out, after peering a bit, that it was a human figure, and that it excitedly moved its arms, which were white. I recollected that Lady Brookes was buried in that place, and I frankly confess that for a moment or two I was possessed by a weak and idle consternation, and stared like a fascinated man. But unless it were a ghost, it must be one of our people, so putting my hand to the side of my mouth I called out, "Who is that there?"

No answer being returned, I called again, and went down the hill.

"It is I, Walton," said a voice that I recognized as Sir Mordaunt's.

I hastened forward, and found my poor friend on his knees beside his wife's grave.

"I could not rest without offering up a prayer over her," said he.

"But for God's sake take care of your own health," said I. "The dew falls like rain, and you are in your shirt-sleeves."

He repeated that he could not rest until he had prayed over her.

"But we can hold a service to-morrow," I exclaimed. "We have a Prayer-book."

"Ay," said he; "but think of her lying in this unconsecrated grave. Don't reproach me, Walton. She was very dear to me. I have lost her for ever."

I grasped his hand and pressed it, meaning by that silent token to let him know there was no reproach, but rather the deepest pity and sorrow, in my heart. Nevertheless, I would not let him go until I had made him rise, and then, when he was on his feet, I gradually led him towards the hut; for, not to speak only of the danger to which he exposed himself by remaining half-clothed in the damp night air, there was something in his manner that made me resolute to get him away from the grave.

I said again that we would hold a service over his wife's remains in the morning, and then I inquired how he had found out where she lay buried.

He answered that he had asked Norie, when I was at work on the beach, and he had told him. He then wished to know if it was possible to preserve her body, so that, should we ever get away from the island, he might be able to have her remains conveyed to England. To soothe him, I said there was wood enough to build a coffin, which we would set about after we had completed a certain project that I would explain the meaning of in the morning. And so I got him to the hut and made him lie down, and went to the door and stood there awhile.

I could not hear the women, but the deep breathing of Norie and the weary seamen made a moving sound, and, combined with the moan of the chafing sea, affected me in a manner I cannot express. I could trace the outlines of their bodies upon the white

sail, and they lay as still as ever did that dead sailor I had buried.

My mind went to the women then, and I thought of Ada Tuke lying in her damp clothes, and the poor widow who in a few brief days had gauged the very lowest depths of human distress, and the girl whose life I had under God been the means of preserving. Great heaven! What a bitter weary watch was that I kept! What a panorama of wild ocean scenes and desolate death was my mind!

When I believed that Sir Mordaunt was asleep, I fell on my knees, and lifting up my face, prayed with an anguish of soul I shall never forget in this life that help might come to us, and that we might not be left to perish miserably on this lonely, unfruitful, and wave-beaten rock. So passed the time until I believed my three hours expired. I then went softly into the hut, but had to gently feel over the bodies of the sleepers before I could distinguish Tripshore. I

shook him, and he started up, on which I instantly spoke to him, that he might recollect himself, and went into the moonlight where he could see me; and then telling him what I had done, and bidding him keep a look-out for ships, and to seek for any wreckage that might be serviceable to us on the beach, I laid myself down in his place, and fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER III.

I AWOKE very much refreshed, and found the sunshine pouring strongly into the hut, and myself alone. I got up and went out, and saw Sir Mordaunt leaning against one of the trees to the right of the hut, watching the rest of the party, who were variously employed about the beach. We shook hands warmly, and I asked him how he did. He told me that he had slept well and felt heartier, and he certainly looked so.

I judged by the sun that the morning was not far advanced, for which I was very thankful, as there was a great deal to be done that day. The first thing that took my eye was a fire burning at the foot of the little hill facing the sea. A number of

pieces of rock had been piled into a square, and the fire made up in it. There was a quantity of brushwood in heaps near the fire, and Norie, coming at that moment with a bundle of the wood, and flinging it down, made me see how he was employing himself. The smoke of the fire went up in a straight line, for there was not a breath of air. The sea lay like oil slowly waving. It was of a most deep and beautiful blue beyond the reef, though the cloudless sky was a light silvery azure. The water broke in long flashing ripples on the reef, and rolled up the beach in little breakers.

Tripshore and Hunter were busy among a quantity of wreckage, a good portion of which had been collected whilst I was asleep. About a stone's throw from where I stood were Mrs. Stretton and Ada Tuke, the former kneeling, but what doing I could not perceive. Beyond them was Carey, spreading some wearing apparel in the sun.

Having exchanged a few words with Sir

Mordaunt I walked over to the ladies, and then saw what they were about. A deck-plank lay upon the sand, and upon it Mrs. Stretton was chopping up some beef-fat out of the cask. A flour-cask stood alongside, and on looking at it, I perceived it was the cask I had found during my watch. After exchanging greetings, and hearing they had slept well and felt well, I expressed my happiness that we should have found the cask of flour.

"The salt water has got to the outer portions of it," said Mrs. Stretton ; "but the flour is dry in the middle. I believe by mixing both parts, and kneading them well with fresh water, we shall not notice the salt when we have baked them in cakes with this fat."

She kept on mincing the fat whilst she spoke, and Miss Tuke stood by, waiting to help her to make the cakes. I was heartily pleased to see them busy, for there is no antidote like work for melancholy.

I called to Tripshore to tell me where the telescope was, and ascended the hill with it. The moment I pointed it in the quarter where the others had seen the shadow on the preceding day, I saw the land ; but I could make nothing of it beyond observing that it was full twenty miles distant, and either a mere rock or else a hill on an island, the lower portions of which were invisible. I carefully searched the rest of the horizon, but could discover nothing, and came back again to the point of land. I struggled with my memory to fashion a mental picture of the Bahamas. My having studied the chart so closely on board the yacht helped me a great deal ; but though I figured all the larger islands, such as Abaco, San Salvador, Eleuthera, and the islands as low as the Caicos Passage, yet I could not even faintly recall the bearings of the islets and cays. Nor indeed would it have served me had I been able to do so ; for I had no idea of our latitude and longitude, and no

means of determining our position. Yet in spite of this I kept on conjecturing and wondering, and asking myself if that land could really be one of the greater and inhabited islands, and whether in that hope it would be wise to venture for it on a raft.

But the idea of a raft recalled our project of the preceding night—a good idea, it seemed to me, and full of promise. So I shut up the glass, and joined Tripshore and Hunter, who, as I have said, were at work among the wreckage, selecting wood for the raft. As I advanced towards them I caught sight of a strange-looking object, resembling a big capsized tub, about fifty yards away in the direction of the wreck. I went to see what it was, and to my astonishment and delight found it a great turtle, weighing, as I should have supposed from the appearance of it, not less than four hundred pounds. It was on its back, and alive. I was thunderstruck at first, and then filled with joy. This, to be sure, was one of the

months in which the turtle on calm moonlight nights comes up the shore, and lays its eggs in the sand. I might fairly suppose that since one was here others were about, so that the idea of our perishing for want of food need no longer haunt me.

I rejoined the men, and asked which of them had caught the turtle.

"It was me, sir," says Tripshore. "Half an hour after you had gone into the hut, I see that chap come up out o' the water. He made me look at him by hissing. He was like a small steam-engine slowly coming along out o' the sea. I stood stock still till he was well ashore, then picks up a piece o' timber, and gets to leeward of him, and shoving the timber under him, I worked and sweated until I managed to heave him over on his back. But, Lord, the weight of him."

"He's full of soup and meat," said I, "and his shell should serve as a tank. And now, my lads, what do you find handy among this raffle?"

"All that we want, sir," responded Hunter.

This was evident, for there was a great quantity of timber, and some of it in big pieces. Among the stuff were the spars I had secured overnight. The men had dragged them ashore, unbent the sails, and snugged away the running gear that had been attached to the canvas. I saw, however, that if we were to get our raft afloat after we had built it, we must construct it down in the bight of land where the water was smooth; and explaining this to the men, we set to work to convey the material to that place. This took us an hour; but at the end of that time we had lashed and nailed three large pieces of timber into the form of a triangle for the foundations of the raft, and we had got this afloat in the smooth water, when Norie shouted to us that the cakes were baked.

We thereupon quitted our work, and after cooling our faces in the salt water, we

walked to the hut, where we found the rest of the party waiting for us to come.

There stood eight brown cakes, smelling very good indeed, upon a plank. I opened two tins of meat, and divided the contents. We then poured some sherry into the water in the kettle, and breakfast was ready. But first Sir Mordaunt asked us to join him in a prayer, which was the wish of us all; so we knelt, whilst he prayed aloud, putting up such a petition as I need not repeat the language of, though any man who can imagine himself in our situation will understand its character.

This done, we fell to our repast, the dog getting his bit of salt meat as usual. I praised the cakes highly. To be sure they were a bit salt, but not disagreeably so.

"Pity some 'baccy don't come ashore, sir," said Tripshore, with a languishing look at the sea.

That was my want too. One of the hardships of those hard times was the being

without tobacco. I sat next to Sir Mordaunt, and whilst we were breakfasting he asked me what scheme I and the seamen were carrying out. I told him what our idea was, and he and the others seemed greatly struck by it.

"It's a fine notion," said Norie. "There's every chance of the raft being sighted. Can you carve letters upon wood, Walton?"

"I have never tried," said I. "But I dare say I can."

"Let me have that job," he exclaimed. "I can carve letters very well. Tell me what to say, and after breakfast I'll set to work."

I proposed an inscription, and asked if it would do. There was a short debate, but nobody seemed able to improve upon it, and so my suggestion was adopted. Norie drew a pencil from his pocket, and scribbled down the words on the deck-plank. I then in a low voice told Sir Mordaunt that we meant to lash a dead body to the raft, and explained

our reason. The idea shocked him just as it had shocked me, but his judgment promptly appreciated the value of the scheme.

"We'll say nothing to the women about that part," said I. "They must be drawn aside whilst we make the body fast."

"But they will see it as the raft floats away," said he.

"Why, perhaps they will," I answered; "but distance will soften the horror."

Here Tripshore jumped up. "Me and Tom's all ready, sir." I rose too, but the baronet put his hand on my arm.

"Pray let us have the service we spoke of," he exclaimed, with a most imploring face.

I could not resist his appeal, precious as the time was. Turning to the men, I said—

"Sir Mordaunt wishes us to join him in a funeral service over poor Lady Brookes' remains. We owe it to her memory, my lads, and to our affection for the kind and

large-hearted gentleman whose loss is the cruellest a man can bear."

Tripshore looked willing at once; but Hunter, a rough-fibred man, seemed impatient, though he said nothing. I took up Carey's Prayer-book, of which the print was not illegible, though parts of it were a good deal smeared through the soaking salt water, and giving the baronet my arm, we stepped into the sunshine, followed by the others, and walked to the place where Lady Brookes lay buried. The sand was heaped where the body was, which enabled us to form a circle round the grave. Sir Mordaunt read the service himself. He pronounced the words firmly, but with a most affecting spirit of devotion, omitting certain solemn parts, which would have been superfluous under the circumstances. I feared he would have broken down before he got to the end, but he struggled on manfully, though several times, when he raised his face, I saw the tears on his cheeks. I cannot conceive a

more pathetic figure than he made. Bare-headed, in his shirt-sleeves, his long beard accentuating his haggard features, his humid eyes, his hands grasping the Prayer-book often thrown up in an imploring gesture when he removed his gaze from the page to fix it upon the bright blue sky—I say it would have melted an iron heart to have seen him. And into this service there entered an element—of horror shall I call it?—that would be absent from the usual ceremony. I mean we could not think of the poor body lying at our feet without reflecting that there she was, dressed as in life, uncoffined, separated from us by a thin layer of sand, such as a breeze of wind might easily scatter, and leave her exposed in her dreadful lonesomeness. When I remembered her terrors, the fright the thunder-storm had caused her, her swooning away because she had not the nerve to hear of the sufferings a fellow-creature—one of her own sex too—had endured, I thought, "Great God! could she but see herself now!"

When the service was over, the two seamen and I went back to the raft, leaving the baronet and the women at the grave, and Norie to carve the letters and mind the fire, which I told him to feed with damp stuff, to raise a thick smoke.

I have said that we had already laid the foundations of the raft in the form of a triangle. I recommended this shape because it gave a kind of bows to the raft, and I believed that by affixing a broad plank of wood as an immovable rudder at the broad end, the thing would blow along steadily. We had plenty of nails and spikes, and the frame of the raft being afloat, we soon decked it. Of course the work was extravagantly rough, but that we cared nothing about, providing we made it strong enough to hold. The raft being completed, we set to work to rig her. We took the yacht's fore-top-gallant yard and securely nailed to it the best and lightest piece of stuff we could come at to serve as a yard.

To this we bent the top-gallant sail, and all three of us buckling to it, stepped the yard that was to serve as a mast into a crevice in the middle of the raft, where we securely wedged, and then stayed it.

Although this description may run glibly, the job was a hard one, because our tools were few, and little to the purpose. The morning passed quickly whilst we were at work, and in the middle of it a pleasant breeze sprang up in the north-west, and kept the sea shivering as though the sunlight flashed in a mighty field of diamonds. It carried the smoke of the fire across the water in steel-blue coils, which looked to be leagues long, and which I was for ever breaking off my work to glance at.

We had scarcely set the mast up on the raft and secured it, when Norie, accompanied by Miss Tuke, came down to us, carrying a piece of deck-plank.

"Here's the inscription," said he, looking well pleased with his work; and he put the

board down on the sand, that we might see it. The letters were bold, well cut, and each as long as my thumb. The inscription ran thus :

JULY —, 18—. "LADY MAUD" WRECKED
ON A BAHAMA CAY. EIGHT SURVIVORS.
SAVE US.

There were a great many letters in this, and I was astonished at the rapidity and accuracy with which they had been carved.

"It would have taken me two days," I said, "and then perhaps no one would be able to read it."

I gave the board to Tripshore, who nailed it at the masthead by standing on Hunter's shoulders.

"Why couldn't you build a raft big enough to carry us all away, Mr. Walton?" said Miss Tuke.

"We mustn't venture it yet," I replied. "Nothing but the certainty of perishing here should make us face the peril of going afloat on a raft."

"But is it likely," said she, "that we should be on the water long without meeting a ship?"

"Ah!" I replied, "if I could foretell that, I should know what to do."

"We cannot go on stopping here," she exclaimed piteously, clasping her hands.

"No; and we don't intend to stop," said I. "Look at the noble signal that smoke is making as it stretches across the ocean. Who knows but that at this very moment it may be seen, and help coming? And see that message," I added, pointing to the board the men were affixing to the mast-head of the raft, "which will shortly be afloat, and which, for all we can tell, may be the means of delivering us from this island before another day is passed. Don't lose heart," said I, tenderly, taking her hand and looking earnestly at her. "Your courage has been our mainstay all through. Don't fail us when we most want you."

She coloured up a little and averted her

face, but made no reply. I beckoned to Norie, and, drawing him aside, told him in a few words what we were about to do, and begged him to go to Sir Mordaunt and ask him to draw the women into the hut, or keep them apart from us and out of sight until we had done. He walked off, and in a minute or two Sir Mordaunt called Miss Tuke, who left us. Presently I saw the baronet, leaning on his niece's arm, and accompanied by Mrs. Stretton and Carey, move slowly towards the interior of the island, as if he had a mind to see the place; and the moment they disappeared we set to work.

The rigidity of the body I had buried on the preceding night determined me not to disturb it. I explained this to the seamen, and Tripshore said he believed that poor Jim Wilkinson would make the best body for our purpose. The two corpses had been buried above high-water mark, and the places where they lay were distinguishable

by the appearance of the sand there. But the men could not remember in which of the graves Wilkinson's body was, and therefore we had to clear away the sand to find it out.

Every nerve, every fibre in my body seemed to shrivel and shrink up at the bare contemplation of exposing the poor fellows' remains, but I would not suffer my inward loathing and horror to master me. I was persuaded that the raft, if sighted, would serve our purpose more effectually if it carried a dead body than if it went bare; and the needs of eight human lives in dire peril, and without any prospect of preservation if help was not summoned, determined me to persevere in our scheme.

Tripshore was deadly pale, and worked with a dogged resolution, as if, like me, he would not permit his feelings to master him. Hunter showed no emotion at all. Happily, the first grave we uncovered contained Wilkinson's body. We raised it, and dusted

the sand from its face, and carried it to the raft. I should have been willing to let it lie on its back, with a piece of canvas over its face ; but Hunter, with whom this scheme had originated, said—

“No, no, sir ; let’s do the job thoroughly. He must be fixed sitting upright, and then they’ll think him alive, and bear down. If they see him on his back, they’ll say, ‘Oh, he’s dead,’ and sail away.”

I could not deny that he was right, so we sat the body up with its back to the mast, and lashed it in that posture ; but so dreadful an object did it look, that I was oppressed with a deadly giddiness and sickness after we had completed the loathsome business, and had to sit for a while and keep my eyes closed.

Nothing now remained to be done but to make the clues of the sail fast and send the raft adrift. The first was easy enough, but the other very difficult, for, calm as it was, the ground swell betwixt the beach and the

reef was tolerably heavy, and would quickly drive the raft ashore and strand her if we did not mind. To guard against this, we carried a line round the mast, keeping both ends in our hands, and arming ourselves with pieces of timber to shove her clear, we scrambled across the limb of land, and reached the extreme point of it, where we hauled upon the line and brought the raft abreast. Then, unreeving the line, we went into the water as high as our waists, and by dint of shoving got the raft clear, when her sail at once caught the wind and away she crawled, dead to leeward, but very steadily, the long rudder-like board astern of her heading her perfectly straight, and the dead body sitting in the shadow of the sail like a living man.

We scrambled back again to the beach, and mounted the hill to watch her, Norie joining us, and bringing the telescope with him. Sir Mordaunt and the women were coming slowly along from the west side of

the island, but observing me to motion and point, they hurried their pace ; but before they reached the hut they stopped and stood looking at the raft, that would be visible to them from that point. I saw Miss Tuke turn to her uncle, and then point to us and then at the raft, clearly astonished at the sight of the man on board, and wondering who it could be. Norie, before joining us, had hove a quantity of damp brushwood on to the fire, that sent up a dense column of smoke that arched over into a beautiful bend when it reached a short height, and went blowing along the sea, casting a long black shadow upon the water, in the very middle of which the raft crawled steadily forward, like a cart going along a straight road. The shadow on her made her an extraordinarily clear figure against the blue water and the sky of the horizon. I was sure that no ship, keeping anything like a good look-out, could miss her ; and as she went further and further

away, and became smaller upon the flashing waters of the south-east, I felt a new stirring of life in me : hope grew buoyant, and for a little time at least I was more light-hearted than I had been, ay, ever since that gale had burst upon the *Lady Maud*, and driven us in darkness into these dangerous waters.

The three of us who had built that raft stood watching her until she was a mere speck in the wake of the smoke. Then muttering an earnest prayer to God that she might effect our purpose, I went down the hill, the seamen following me.

Catching sight of the turtle as I walked, I told Hunter to kill it : first, because I knew it is a cruel thing to keep those animals long on their back ; and secondly, because its meat would save the other provisions, and be a relish for us, who, Heaven knows, stood in need of any comfort in that way that we could come at. I was in no mood to watch him destroy the creature, so I

walked over to the trees under whose shadow Sir Mordaunt and the others were resting themselves. On my drawing near, Miss Tuke asked me eagerly who the person was that had gone away in the raft. I was obliged to tell her, but I did so with reluctance and a kind of shame.

"Was he *dead*?" she exclaimed, in a thrilling whisper, and grasping Mrs. Stretton's hand.

I exactly explained our motive, but the shocked expression lingered long in her face.

I was worn out and overcome with the heat, and threw myself down upon the grass. Seeing my exhaustion, Mrs. Stretton filled a shell with sherry and water, and I swallowed the draught gratefully. She then came and sat by my side. I had had little to say to her since we had been cast ashore, and small leisure to observe her closely. She had removed her hat, one that Miss Tuke had given her, and which the sea had soaked without tearing from her head—I say, she

had removed her hat when under the trees, and her thick, black, beautiful hair had come away from its fastenings, and hung about her in a manner that gave a peculiar power and a wild kind of spirit to her dark, handsome, and uncommon face.

"You bear your sufferings with admirable courage," said I. "Hard as our plight is, your trials have been so heavily in excess of ours, that I can only admire and wonder at your fortitude and patience."

"It will not do to look back," she answered. "We might humbly wish that God's hand had fallen less heavily upon your poor friend, Mr. Walton."

"I hope," said I—we spoke in a low voice that could not be overheard—"that Miss Tuke does not think me wicked in helping to send a poor dead man in quest of succour. Heaven knows, whatever I have done, I have done for the best."

"Oh, be sure we all believe that," said she, with a note of rich and tender gratitude

in her voice. And after a short silence, she asked, "Do you think we shall ever get away from this island?"

"Yes," I replied; for whether I thought so or not, the proper answer to her question was yes.

"Sir Mordaunt frets cruelly over his wife," she continued. "It is breaking his heart, I believe, to think of her lying in the sand there in the condition in which she was buried. He told me you had promised to get the men to make a coffin for her. Cannot that be done?"

"Yes," said I. "I had forgotten. After dinner it shall be done. And by the look of the sun, it seems about time that we got our midday meal. How many cakes did you bake?"

"Enough for dinner and supper," she replied.

"Then let us get dinner now," said I; for by this time Hunter had done his business with the turtle, and with the help of Trip-

shore had dragged the great creature up to the hut.

As there was nothing else cooked but the meat in the tins, we had some of that; but in order to save the slender stock, I asked Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke to devote themselves that afternoon to boiling some of the salt beef in the kettle—the only cooking utensil we possessed—and I likewise requested Norie to cut up the turtle for salting and drying. I then in a low voice told Sir Mordaunt that I had not forgotten my promise, and that I would set to work after dinner to build a coffin for his wife's remains. He pressed my hand in silence.

It was a bitter thing to look at our miserable repast, and round upon our rude hut, and recall the *Lady Maud's* sumptuous cabin and plentiful good fare. Only a painter could give you any idea of the interior the hut presented, and of our appearance as we sat or stood, eating with our fingers. No one who has not suffered in

that way can imagine what it is for the civilized instincts to find themselves abruptly and helplessly plunged into a state of pure barbarism. The women used the knives when eating, and managed with less discomfort now that they had the little cakes as platters for their portions of preserved meat ; but we males had to eat like monkeys, that is, there was nothing for it but to use our fingers for forks, and to Sir Mordaunt, who was a most fastidious man in his habits, this trifling hardship was a sterner grievance than the being without a bed, or the having no coat nor hat to cover him.

We made in that hut a complete picture of a shipwrecked party. Sir Mordaunt, as I say, was without coat or hat ; I was in my bare feet ; Norie had not yet manufactured the extraordinary cap from a piece of canvas that he afterwards wore. Though the sun had dried our clothes, yet the salt water had given them a most beggarly aspect, more

especially the women's. Then, as we had built the hut among the trees, we had the trunks of some of them standing among us and crowding the interior. Happily the grass made the ground a soft lodging; but taken altogether, the sail as a carpet, the yacht's timbers nailed roughly to the trees, the trees in the midst of the hut, coupled with our melancholy figures, one lying, another standing, a third squatting, produced one of the wildest and most striking pictures that can be conceived.

"I wonder," says Norie, filling the shell with water from the kettle, and eyeing it with an air of rueful wonder, "I wonder," says he, "if such a calamity as this ever befell a yachting party before."

"It may well have happened," said I.

"And it may happen again, sir," said Tripshore.

"If ever our misfortunes come to be known," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, "they should make yacht-owners who undertake

long cruises very cautious in their selection of skippers. And yet, Walton, as you know, I had the fullest confidence in Purchase. I never for a moment doubted that he was a first-rate navigator."

Tripshore looked at me.

"How long will it take the raft to get into the track of ships?" asked Miss Tuke.

This question started us on a new conjecture; but it was quite impossible to arrive at any conclusion, simply because we had no notion in what part of the Bahamas this island lay.

"If only the chart of these islands had been washed ashore," said I, "we should be able to form some idea how far distant the nearest inhabited land is by giving this rock a theoretical position. The only islands I can remember as inhabited are New Providence, Abaco, Andros, and Inagua. Of course there are others, but my memory does not carry them. Yet even the islands I name run from the high north away south

as far as the Windward Passage ; consequently this cay cannot be very far from *one* of them. But how does that one bear ? How far is it ? How are we to reach it ? ”

“ That’s it, sir,” answered Hunter. “ If them questions could be answered, there’d be no call to worrit ourselves long.”

“ Suppose a ship sights the raft, what will she do ? ” asked Mrs. Stretton.

“ Why, mum,” replied Tripshore, “ if her skipper has eddication enough to read the board, and has a mind to help us, he’ll carry the board along with him to the port he puts into, and give information there, and a wessel will be sent to look for us. Or if he’s bound on a long woyage, then I suppose he’d speak the first ship he met, and give her the news, who’d report the wreck on her arrival. That would be about it, sir, I think ? ” said he to me.

I answered yes, though if a government ship encountered the raft, she would probably start in quest of us at once. “ But,”

said I, in a hopeful voice, "be the vessel that sights the raft what she will, help is sure to come ;" and so speaking, I went out of the hut, calling to Tripshore and Hunter to follow me.

When I had them alone, I explained Sir Mordaunt's wish ; and fancying that Hunter hung back from the job, as one that seemed to him of a sentimental kind and not to refer to our present needs, nor to our prospects, I added that the baronet was sure to gratefully remember their action in this matter should we come to be rescued, and that they knew he was rich enough to make his gratitude a thing worth earning.

Tripshore stood in no need of an incentive of this kind, but it put a heartiness into Hunter, who said "he was always agreeable to turn to and oblige people, more 'specially when they was his boss, as he still reckoned Sir Mordaunt to be ; though he believed that when sailors was cast away, as we was, the law left it to their own

hoption whether they should continue as men, or be their own masters."

It was a dreadfully dismal job for persons in our situation to fall to. Nothing but my affection for, and my sympathy with, Sir Mordaunt could have induced me to take a part in such work. We managed it by collecting a quantity of deck planks, and nailing them together into a kind of long box. We worked close beside the grave, in the shadow of the hill. Indeed, out of that shadow we should not have been able to lift our hands, for the sun was fierce enough to roast us alive, and the gay wind that was blowing did not in the least degree qualify that scorching and blinding effulgence. In this tropical fiery splendour the coral sand tortured the eye that rested even an instant upon its glaring surface, whilst the sea in the south was a great tremulous blaze that seemed to fill the whole of that quarter with a fog of silver-white glory, so that the horizon all that way was as completely shut

out as if a body of vapour had rolled down over it. Nevertheless, we worked very steadily ; and, indeed, there was not much to be done, seeing that we did not stop to make the coffin sightly, but just nailed the boards roughly together, so that the poor remains could lie in the sand in a condition to be removed whenever the time arrived.

None of the others came near us. Norie tended the fire, but stopped short at that point. They all knew what we were doing, that we were engaged upon a solemn and dreadful task not proper to intrude on.

I dare say we were an hour and a half in making that coffin, such as it was ; but when it was finished, the worst part remained. If it had been a hard trial to me to exhume the sailor's corpse, I know no words to express my horror at having to lift up Lady Brookes' body from the sand. Yet I dared not say I would not help the men, lest they should turn and refuse to go on.

No doubt I made more of it than I should under other circumstances. My nerves were unstrung by the trials and scenes and hardships we had gone through. Though I had been rendered somewhat buoyant in spirits by the raft going adrift, yet it was no more than a little fickle gleam of the sunshine of hope on my mind. It was clouded again, and my heart dark. Besides, it was a mighty trial to look upon a human face coming blindly up out of the sand—a face whose lineaments would reflect the horror that they excited in the imagination. Above all, was it a mighty trial to look upon a face I had known in life, whose lustrous eyes had often met mine, whose voice I seemed to hear if I did but strain my fancy—to look, I say, upon that familiar face appearing amid the sand, as the seamen carefully scratched about with their hands, disclosing first one part and then another of the body, until, my God! she lay there, a fully-dressed woman, with her eyes blind

with sand, and her hands by her side, and the rings sparkling upon her fingers !

I asked Hunter to remove the rings. He pulled, but they would not come away.

"No matter," said I. "Lift her gently, men, and lay her in the coffin."

This was done, and the coffin boarded up. We all three then went to work to deepen the grave, and having buried the coffin, left the dismal place.

This job had heavily depressed me. We were red-hot with the heat and the toil, and went for a drink ; but in compliance with my wish, Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton had taken the kettle to boil some salt beef, and so to slake our thirst we had to walk across the island in the broiling sun to the well. This was very annoying, yet excepting that kettle, we had nothing in which we could store water.*

* We had the beef cask, but it was full of meat, and we dared not remove the junk from the brine in the cask, lest it should putrefy. We also had the sherry cask, but at that time we thought the wine too precious to let run.

As we went to the well, I told Hunter to go to work presently, and clean the flesh out of the shell of the turtle, and then the shell would serve us for a tank. It was too great a tax, I said, to be obliged to cross the island every time we wanted a drink.

After reaching the well and quenching our thirst, we stood awhile looking away into the sea in the north. This side of the island was very flat, and yielded us but a narrow horizon. I saw the white ribs of a reef glancing in the dark blue water about a mile away in the north-west, and beyond that was a shadow upon the sea that looked like the eddies formed by a tide running over the shallow surface of another reef.

"Can we be among the shoals to the westward of Long Island?" said I, remembering on a sudden the swarm of little cays and reefs marked upon the chart over against that piece of land. "If so," I added, with a feeling of despair in me that I could not check, "I can't see how on earth

we are to be rescued unless we make shift to get away on a raft, and leave the rest to Providence. No vessel is likely to come near these waters. The proper channels will be leagues away on either side."

"The water looks open enough out yonder," replied Tripshore, pointing into the north-east. "If we be in the midst of them shoals you speak of, they'd be showing all around."

"What part of these cussed islands we're castaway on, I don't know," said Hunter. "But whatever may be your detarmination, Mr. Walton, mine's this: I'm not going to sit down on this here rock and wait for something to happen. I don't say nothen 'll come of that there raft we sent adrift this morning; but meanwhiles there's wood enough left to build a machine that'll float two men. I'm agreeable to go to work upon it, and when it's built, if no one else 'll join, then, if you'll give me three days' allowance o' wittles, I'll put off alone and

see what's to be found. Ye'll be discovering soon that it'll be better to take your chance o' drowning than stopping here."

"I don't see my way to that——" said I.

"But I do," he interrupted.

"Because," I continued, determined not to notice the man's mutinous manner, "we cannot construct a raft that will not be absolutely at the mercy of the wind. If we could reckon upon a north or an east wind blowing steadily for a week or so, then, indeed, our raft might drift to some inhabited shore. But the chances are almost all against us. The first bit of sea that got up would sweep us off the raft like chaff. Or we might be blown into the Atlantic without sighting a vessel, and wretchedly perish there."

"But what's to be done, then?" he asked fiercely. "Are we to stick here till we rot?"

"We must wait a little," I answered.

"Give that raft we have sent adrift a

chance. Or that smoke we are making may be seen. Some safer means of escape than a raft may offer. If nothing turns up, then we must come to your remedy."

He muttered something under his breath, turned on his heels, and walked off, and he sullenly kept in advance of us the whole way across the island.

As we rounded the bushes which brought us within view of the place where Lady Brookes lay buried, I saw Sir Mordaunt at work upon the grave. I left Tripshore and went to him, and on drawing near I perceived that he was framing the grave with pieces of rock. He took my hand in both his and pressed it affectionately, and thanked me for having carried out his wishes. I asked him how he knew we had completed the task, as no one had approached us whilst we were at work.

"Norie," said he, "caught sight of you lowering the coffin, and came and told me."

"That is hard work for you," said I, pointing to the pieces of rock he had collected.

"I wish to know where she lies," he answered. "The wind and rain would soon level a mound of sand, but these stones will remain; and I have asked Norie to nail two pieces of wood into the shape of a cross, and carve her name upon it, and the date of her death, and then we will set up the cross securely at the head there."

It was an affecting thing to see him at this work. I thought he looked ill and worn, and his attire, and long beard, and humid eyes, and his slow movements, all combined to make the picture a pathetic one. I stood in silence, wondering at the tenderness of this gentleman for the memory of a woman whose character in life was even less lovable than I have thought right to describe it; and at the unselfishness of his nature, that left him heart enough, in

the midst of our distress, hardships, and anxiety, to do all the honour that love could suggest to the poor creature who lay under the sand. To me, I own, all this seemed an idle duty. Had our escape been sure, no matter how long delayed, I might have understood the baronet's anxiety to preserve his wife's remains, that they could be removed hereafter. But, so far as we then knew, we ourselves were as people in the very valley of the shadow of death. One by one we might drop away before help reached us, if ever help should come; and the state of mind which these thoughts induced made me behold but little of worth in the devoted memory that was influencing Sir Mordaunt.

However, I had the decency to keep my ideas to myself, nor at such a moment at least would I intrude upon him the fears which at that time oppressed me. I told him, if he would leave the building of the grave to me, I would take care it was

properly done, and the cross firmly erected. It was not fit work for him, I said.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "This is my share. I could not assist in the other part. I had not courage even to approach and watch you. But this is strictly my duty—my religious duty. Do not offer to help me, Walton. It will soothe me to look back and recall this labour."

As this was his wish, I said no more, and went to the hut to rest a while. I noticed Hunter on the beach, standing near the remains of the wreckage there, and looking about him, as I supposed, to see if anything more had come ashore. Norie was helping Mrs. Stretton to cook the beef and keep the fire going; but I presumed they had not been there long, and that they would not stop there long, for the heat of the sun and the fire together was not to be borne. Under the trees, and to the right of the hut, was Tripshore, operating upon the turtle, Carey looking

on. I had given this job to Hunter, but it did not signify who performed it, and if Hunter was searching the beach he was well employed.

Inside the hut I found Miss Tuke kneeling on the sail, making cakes. Her sleeves were rolled above her elbows, her hair was rough, yet I never admired her more than I did then, and I thought it impossible that any posture should suit her better. I sat down near the plank on which she was moulding the cakes, and told her what we had been doing, and how I had left her uncle employed.

"He thinks of nothing else," she answered, mournfully. "He seems to forget that we are shipwrecked, and may never escape from this dreadful island."

"On the contrary," said I, "he is acting precisely as a man would who firmly believes that we shall escape. He begged me to make the coffin, and is himself making the grave, in the full conviction that he will

come or send for his wife's remains for burial in England."

"But *how* are we to get away?" said she, pausing in her work, and looking me full in the face.

I could only repeat what I had said before—that we must hope the smoke of the fire would be seen, or the raft with our message upon it encountered.

"It will not take us long to burn all the bushes on the island," said she; "and then how shall we be able to make a fire? And how many days will you grant before supposing that the raft has disappeared without any ship having seen it?"

"What *can* we do if we are forbidden even to hope?" I replied, tormented by these questions, which only too accurately interpreted my own feelings. "The bushes are not all burnt yet, and the raft has been gone only four or five hours. We must be patient, and have faith in God's goodness. Who knows what a day may unfold?"

She had too brave a soul to go on murmuring, yet it was clear that she understood our situation as accurately as I, and that she could not look away from the immediate present without her heart fainting in her.

"If the worst comes to pass," said I; "if, after waiting, we see no prospect of relief; then, before our food fails us, we must turn to and pull this hut down, and make as big and strong a raft as we can manage. But that alternative, as I have told the others, is so full of danger, that before adopting it our extremity should be greater than it is, and our patience all gone."

As I said this, Hunter put his head into the hut, and said there was a wooden case come ashore. It was too large for him to carry alone. He wanted to know where Tripshore was.

"I'll give you a hand," said I, jumping up; and I followed him to the beach.

It was a large, white wood square box,

and glanced among the ripples which rolled up the beach. It lay close to where we had launched the raft. We waded into the water, and hoisted it out of the sand, and conveyed it to the hut, where we prized open the lid, and came to a casing of tin. This we cut, and found the case full of biscuits, which had been perfectly protected from the water by the tin casing.

I called to Miss Tuke to come and look, and told her that every discovery of this kind improved our chances of escape, by enabling us to give the raft more time to do its work.

"I for one shan't stop for that, Mr. Walton!" exclaimed Hunter. "I've been overhauling that wreckage down there, and there's stuff enough for my purpose."

"What do you mean to do?" I asked.

"Build a kind of catamaran," he replied, "and take my chance alone, if nobody 'll come with me."

"You can do as you please," said I,

noticing the obstinate look in the man's face ; "nobody will stop you. You're a sailor, and don't require any one to point out the risks you'll run."

Just then Mrs. Stretton and Norie arrived, the latter sweating under the kettle, that was full of salt meat, from which the steam was soaring in clouds. Tripshore, hearing our voices, also came round to where we stood, and listened, with the gleaming knife with which he was operating on the turtle forking out of his hand.

"All hands being here, saving Sir Mor-daunt," said Hunter, folding his arms and looking around him, "I'll put my case. Here we are, imprisoned on a island. Where it is, no one knows. Two blessed days we've been here, and ne'er a sail have we seen. My belief is, that if we was to stop here twelve months we'd see nothen go by. What have we got to wait for, then ? The raft that's gone adrift *may* do some good—I was willin' enough to lend a hand to build

it—but it may come to nothen ; and are we goin' to keep all on waiting and waiting, when, maybe, that raft's gone to pieces ? What I'm goin' to do is to build a sort of houtrigging machine as 'll not capsize, and light enough for a man to shove along. If nobody 'll come in it, I'll go alone. If I'm picked up, good ; the wessel as picks me up 'll come for the others ; and if I'm washed overboard and drowned, well, I'd as lief rot in the sea as rot here."

"Let him do it," cried Norie, eagerly, looking at me. "It's a chance, at all events."

"Hunter is his own master," I replied. "He knows the risks, and that the odds against him are ninety-nine in the hundred."

"Damn the odds !" shouted the man, angrily. "What are the odds here ? They're *all* agin us. You know that, Mr. Walton." Turning to Tripshore, he said, "Will you give me a hand to build the thing I want ?"

"Ay," said the other, "I'll give you a

hand, Tom ; but it'll be helping you to build your coffin, my lad."

"Well, when you're ready, come," exclaimed Hunter. "There's a spell o' daylight left yet."

So saying, he walked hastily towards the wreckage, from which he had already selected a portion of the material he required. When he was out of hearing, Miss Tuke said—

"Why are you opposed to his scheme, Mr. Walton?"

"I am not opposed to it, I am indifferent," I answered. "I should favour it if the chance of the man losing his life was not, as I believe it is, equal to a dead certainty."

"But he may sight a ship, and be the means of sending help to us," exclaimed Norie.

"Yes, he may—he may—and he mayn't!" I replied, bitterly. "If there's any good in a raft at all, then the raft we sent away this

morning should answer our end. If the thing is seen, the dead messenger aboard will not appeal less forcibly than a living man. If it is not seen, there is no life to be lost, no long hours of torment to be endured."

"But something must be done—some effort must be made," said Norie, in a low voice.

"My God!" I cried, "have we been idle? What more could we have done? Tell me what to do—give me an idea. If practicable, it shall be executed to the letter. But don't force us to throw away our lives in a senseless effort to preserve them."

"Tom means to go," said Tripshore, who stood by; "and he'll have his way. Only he shouldn't be let to use up all the nails, Mr. Walton. We may come to want 'em ourselves."

"Go you and help him, Tripshore, as you promised," said I; "but keep an eye upon the nails too, for, as you say, we may want them, though I hope not."

For here let me repeat that the idea of the eight, or, if Hunter would not stay, the seven, of us committing ourselves to the sea in such a raft as we should be able to construct, was intolerable to me. Of all marine fabrics, the raft has been the theatre of the worst sufferings. At the very best it is but a clumsy platform, at the mercy of the winds and surges. A very light sea will set it awash, so that you may reckon upon sitting up to your hips in water nearly all the time you are aboard. It needed no very vigorous imagination to conceive what our situation would be in a seaway, the water pouring in coils over the level stage, that would swing to the surges like an ill-balanced kite, our bodies soaked to the skin, our provisions washed away or spoiled. It was not to be expected that Norie and the women could realize all that was meant by the proposal to leave the island on a raft; but to me it offered itself as a dreadful alternative, and though life was as dear to

me as it was to the others, I felt that it would be a wiser resolve to stick to the island, and trust to God's mercy for a rescue, and if no succour came, then to die on dry land, than launch ourselves upon the sea in a raft, and take the risk of courting in that way all those dreadful sufferings, that protracted anguish, and that final extinction, which make some of the naval records the ghastliest and most terrible literature in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

It was hard to tell the hour by the look of the sun, but I guessed it to be about four o'clock. I sat down on the grass near the hut, with my back against a tree, whilst Mrs. Stretton and Carey hung up the pieces of beef which had been cooked, and Miss Tuke finished her job of cake-making. The fire had waned; but though we should not let it expire, it was impossible without incessant and painful labour to keep it throwing up a heavy smoke. Only a very thin trail of smoke went up now.

I asked myself, Even should the densest smoke we could get out of the bush be seen, would its meaning be understood? Would it not be thought the smoke of a steamer? Or if guessed to come from this rock, the

smoke of a fire lighted by some persons who had landed on a short visit ?

These were crushing thoughts, for, as you know, we had but two chances—the smoke and the raft ; and if we gave up the smoke as hopeless, we had nothing left but the raft, which might prove useless too, and what then was to be done ?

My dejection was so great for a time, that a feeling of utter indifference stole over me. I thought to myself, Well, if God has deserted us, what is the good of our striving ? If we are sentenced to perish here, why chafe our hearts into rags with thoughts of how to get away ? Every mortal creature has his appointed time, and if ours has arrived, let us not make ten thousand deaths of it by our fears and recoilings and our madness to escape it.

The breeze that had been blowing all day had fallen somewhat, and was now a gentle wind. The sun was still high, and the water on fire under it. It seemed cruelly hard

that we should have this fine weather now when it was of no use, when had it come earlier it would have saved us from this dreadful fate by enabling us to ascertain our whereabouts, and to steer the yacht accordingly. I looked at the reef where she had gone to pieces, and at the water beyond, but could see no fragment of her. There was a very slight swell rolling in from the sea, and the reef gleamed in it as the water rose and fell, and every now and again there would be a sudden beautiful play of foam, which glistened in a hundred tints in the sunshine, like the sparkling of light in trembling dewdrops.

All the while I looked I was saying to myself, "In what part of the Bahamas is this island? What land is that visible from the hill-top there? Is it possible that no vessel ever traverses those leagues of dark blue sea away yonder, near enough for her people to see our signal, or for us to spy her canvas or the smoke from her funnel?" In this age,

when all the oceans are crowded with shipping, it seemed scarcely conceivable that our fate should have thrown us upon an island in unnavigable waters. Remembering my passing mood at that time, I can understand those fits of sullenness and of ferocity which have possessed the shipwrecked mariner as hope dies in his breast.

I sat watching the two seamen collecting the material for a small raft on the beach, with a dull, unconcerned eye. I had never felt so hopeless before ; but, thank God, the depression was but transient.

I had been resting and musing in this way for some time, when Sir Mordaunt came from his wife's grave, where he had been toiling since we had buried the coffin. His appearance it was that rallied me, by making me feel ashamed of the selfish character of my despair in the face of such an affliction as had come upon him. He walked very slowly, and showed many symptoms of great physical distress. I met

him, and gave him my arm. He leaned upon me wearily, but said nothing until he had seated himself.

"Have you finished your task?" said I.

"Yes," he replied. "I can do no more. I have covered the grave with stones, and to-morrow, I trust, Norie will have completed the cross he promised to make and inscribe. I knew the labour would soothe me, Walton. Now that I have marked her resting-place with my own hands, my mind is calmer than it was."

"I hope you will not expose yourself again to the sun," said I, "nor attempt any more hard work."

"Ah, I am too old for hard work," said he, with a sad smile, laying his hand on mine. "And surely, Walton, shipwreck ages a man's heart terribly. Who could have imagined that our cruise would end in this way? Yet you all seem to bear up well. Where are the others? Where is Ada?"

"In the hut, with Norie. The other

women will, I expect, be at work on the turtle."

"And what is Tripshore about?"

I explained, believing that he would take my view of Hunter's scheme; but instead, he exclaimed, "Why, the man is a brave fellow to venture it. Do you say he will go alone?"

"Who would accompany him?"

"Yes, indeed; but that leaves him so much the braver. Do you know, he may fall in with a vessel, or manage to reach some inhabited coast. It will help our chance, Walton."

He was eager and restless on a sudden. He looked with animated eyes across the sea, and clasped and unlocked his hands.

"Yes," he repeated, "it will help our chances. Life is still precious, Walton. It would be a dreadful thing to die on this island—no living creature left to tell the world what has become of us. Some effort must be made."

I knew that as well as he. However, it would have been cruel to extinguish the hope, and, I may say, the new spirit which my explanation of Hunter's scheme had kindled in him, by representing its idleness. Indeed, I was heartily glad to see him waking up out of his grief, and taking an interest in our distressful position, and admitting the preciousness of life. His misery had been dangerously numbing his mind, and had he continued much longer in that mental condition, I have no doubt that he would have fallen melancholy mad. This quickening in him therefore gave me real pleasure, and I applauded myself for my good sense in carrying out his wishes with respect to his wife's interment, and in not hindering him by officious friendship from doing his part. The mind knows its own burdens best, and how to vent itself; and certainly one way of lightening melancholy is to let it expend itself in forms of its own choosing.

After Tripshore and Hunter had been working for an hour down in the creek, whither they had carried the stuff for the raft, they came up to the hut for their supper. It was time for that meal, as we could guess more by our appetites than by the sun; and as we had a mind to treat ourselves to a change of food, we set a piece of boiled beef upon the deck-plank, and each person helped himself to a biscuit.

It was easy to see how greatly Sir Mordaunt and the others were taken by Hunter's scheme, by the way they regarded him. They eyed him as if he was a hero. Almost as soon as he presented himself, he was asked by Sir Mordaunt what progress he had made with his raft.

"Why, sir," he answered, "I hope by noon to-morrow to have put this beast of a island a long way astern."

"You have great resolution and courage," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "I pray that God may protect and guide you."

"He won't guide us here," answered Hunter, bluntly; "and protection 'll be of no use if we're not to get away. As well be drowned, I says, as become a skeleton on a island. I know this, sir—I've got nothen to do but to keep all on steering west, and I'm bound to come right."

"Wind and weather permitting," said Tripshore.

"Nothing 'll divart me," said Hunter, sullenly. "Right or wrong, when that raft's built, I'm off."

He devoured his allowance of food rapidly, wild with impatience to fall to his work again. Tripshore, noticing the general sympathy with the man's scheme, made haste to finish his supper, so that the others might not think he was reluctant to assist his mate. I kept silent, resolved to say nothing more on the subject.

As Hunter was leaving the hut, he said to me, "I suppose you'll let me have the compass, sir?"

"It is Sir Mordaunt's property," I answered.

"Certainly you may have it," exclaimed the baronet.

"Remember," said I, "should we ultimately have to betake ourselves to a raft, we shall want that compass, to know in what direction we drift."

"But what raft do ye mean to build?" inquired Hunter. "Where's the wood? It'll be pretty nigh all used up by the time I'm done."

"There's plenty here," said I, pointing to the hut.

"Oh, I forgot that," said he.

"Let him have the compass, Walton," cried Norie.

"Yes, if he goes alone, he should be furnished with every requirement our miserable stock will yield," said Sir Mordaunt. "Hunter risks his life for us, remember, Walton."

"He knows," said I, "that my objections

are not made to defeat his wishes, but to protect ourselves, and him too, for the matter of that."

The man, without answering, walked swiftly away, Tripshore following leisurely. It was not very pleasant for me to look round, and to see on the faces of our little company that they considered my timidity was trying to deprive them of a chance of escape. Yet I could not mistake their manner. I would particularly refer to Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton and Norie. This touched me to the quick. Was it not to my interest as much as to theirs that Hunter should venture his life, if he chose, to find us help? I objected to his enterprise because I could not endure that the man should sacrifice his life to no purpose; and also because it seemed an unmanly thing to let him go forth alone into the great sea upon a little raft, though any one of us who had offered to accompany him would, in my opinion, have acted with criminal folly.

Depressed by the behaviour of my companions, and greatly vexed by it—for I could put my hand on my breast and say with an honest heart that I had done my best for them all, and would strive to do more if time were given me—I took the glass and walked to the hill, partly to search the sea, and partly that I might be alone.

As I passed the fire, I stopped to throw some wood upon it. It was nearly out, but the wood soon kindled, and sent up a volume of smoke, the twigs and stems of the bushes being almost as dry as dead wood, whereas the leaves, being green, damped the blaze, and made a smoke like one of those burning heaps of leaves and stubble and rubbish which you have seen in fields. The sun was still very hot, but it was westering fast, and its noontide fierceness was gone. The first thing I noticed on reaching the top of the hill was Lady Brookes' grave. Sir Mordaunt must have worked very hard, and I wondered where he had found all the stones

and pieces of rock he had piled upon it. He had raised them very near as high as a man's waist. There was no fear of that grave being missed, should the baronet ever be able to send for the poor lady's remains.

I sat down on top of the hill, with my knees up in front of me, upon which I rested the telescope. The gentle wind that was blowing was very sweet, though warm, and greatly qualified the heat of the sunlight. As I gazed around me, I thought, What a little bit of an island is this ! What a speck upon the mighty Atlantic, whose vast waters washed the eastern heavens, and interposed nearly four thousand miles of ocean betwixt us and home ! I searched the horizon all that way, wondering, since the atmosphere was so clear, whether there would be land in sight ; but I could see nothing that looked like land, nor any appearance of a vessel. All that was visible upon the water were the reefs I have before described, with here and there a shadow, that might well have

passed for the reflection of a cloud, had the sky not been clear, but which I could not doubt would be a shoal.

I then brought the telescope to bear upon the south and west, and scanned those quarters very closely and narrowly. Nothing rewarded my search beyond the point of land we had before descried. I tried hard to determine its features, but it was too far off: it was not more, indeed, than a faint blue cloud in appearance.

I put the glass down, and, folding my arms, looked idly and listlessly about me, with something of that vacancy of soul that had been in me a short time before. The two men were hard at work in the creek. They had made great progress with the raft, which consisted of several planks nailed to short beams; and they had contrived a sort of box amidships, like an open companion hatchway, meant, I suppose, for Hunter to sit and paddle in. There was a certain cleverness in the form of the raft, and for

fishing, or for making short excursions, or even for venturing for the distant glimpse of land, it would have been a very valuable thing on a fine smooth day ; but literally to go to sea in, it looked to me as worthless as a single plank, and I was more than ever persuaded that the man would be acting like a madman to quit the island on so frail and dangerous a contrivance.

The rest of the party had come out of the hut, and were sitting under the trees, which were, I believe, stunted *brasileto*. There they could see the men working, and yet be in the shade. They made a sad group for me to watch. It was a cruel situation for women to be in, more particularly for a delicate girl like Miss Tuke, who had been flung on a sudden from the luxury of a fine yacht into a state of absolute homelessness, beggary, and harsh privation, backed and darkened by the shadow of terrible death. Grievous was it, too, to look at Mrs. Stretton, and think that we had saved her from one

desperate peril, only to plunge her into an even worse form of suffering ; for suffering is to be measured by time. Another day might have terminated her anguish on the wreck ; but who could guess how long our present imprisonment was to last, and how much misery we should have to endure before we were visited by death or succoured by human hands ?

My eyes, quitting my poor companions, wandered over the reef on which we had struck, and which from this height I could clearly see gleaming in the crystalline blue water. Only three of the bodies of the crew had come ashore, and I supposed that the others had been washed by the current away to sea. Thither also, no doubt, had gone the spars of the yacht and the other floating portions, and may be most of those stores which would have been so precious to us in our destitution. I imagined there was a trickle of tide setting to the westward now, and I was letting my eye run

that way, when I caught sight of a black object in the water, about three-quarters of a mile distant from the westernmost point of the reef.

I believed at first that it was a shark, but it looked too big for a shark. I snatched up the glass and pointed it. The instant the object entered the field of the lenses I perceived that it was a boat bottom up.

I would not credit my eyes at first, and continued looking and looking, until it was impossible for me to doubt that the object was a boat, with her keel just above the water, and portions of her bottom glancing in the delicate swell.

I was so agitated, that I trembled as though a wintry blast had struck me; my heart seemed to stop beating, and I felt as if about to faint; a cold perspiration covered my forehead; involuntarily my hands clenched themselves until my finger nails cut into the palm. I closed my eyes tight, to clear the brain, and held them closed for

some moments, after which I pointed the glass and looked again ; and being now quite sure, I sprang to my feet and hallooed to the men in the creek with all my might. They dropped their work, affrighted by my voice, and stared. I put my hand to my mouth and bawled, "There's a boat, bottom up, out yonder ! Come up here and look at her !" And I stood pointing in so wild an attitude, that they might well have imagined I had taken leave of my senses. However, they instantly came running to the hill, and the others, who had heard my cry, came running too, all save Sir Mordaunt, who half rose, but sank back again.

Tripshore was the first to reach me. I gave him the glass, and pointed to the boat. Instantly he cried, "Ay, it's a boat ! It must be the yacht's boat ; her that the men launched, and that drowneded them."

"What is it ?" shouted Hunter, rushing up to us.

"Look, Tom! Isn't that the yacht's boat there?" exclaimed Tripshore.

He peered, and uttered a loud cry. "Yes, yes! that's her! that's the boat we launched, and that capsized with us. For the Lord's sake, Mr. Tripshore, let's go and secure her."

By this time the others had arrived, and a whole volley of questions was let fly at me. They thought it was a ship I had seen. But I had now recovered my composure; and after briefly answering their questions, and giving them the telescope, to look at the boat for themselves, I turned to Tripshore and Hunter.

"Is your raft ready to go afloat?" I asked.

"She'll swim as she is," answered Hunter, in a voice full of uncontrollable excitement.

"Will she carry you both?"

"Both?" he replied. "Ay, four of us."

"You'll want a couple of paddles," said I. "That boat is within a mile, and by paddling you'll fetch her easily."

"A couple of planks 'll do for paddles, Tom," exclaimed Tripshore.

"Come along!" shouted the other.

"Take a tow-line with you!" I bawled after them, as they dashed down the hill.

Two were enough to launch the raft, and as they were both seamen they knew what to do. Though I had pulled myself together again, my heart beat strongly. That boat, unless damaged beyond all possibility of repair, might save our lives. If she were indeed the boat that the yacht carried amidships, then she would be big enough to receive the whole of us. And never had I seen the hand of God plainer in any circumstance than in this; for Hunter's raft, against the building of which I had put my face, lay almost ready to shove off in, so that we should be able to get the boat at once and save precious time, and be beforehand with the darkness, or with any wind that might come with the darkness.

Seeing the baronet wave his hand to us, I

asked Mrs. Stretton to go to him, and tell him that the yacht's boat was there, and that the men were about to bring her in. She went at once, whilst the rest of us stayed on the hill-top, to watch the boat and the movements of the men.

As I have said, the frame of the raft was finished, and, indeed, this was not a job that need have been long in doing, for the planks and pieces of timber were all ready there. The size of the raft was not bigger than the top of a dinner table, and there were two of them to put it together. Yet it was very nearly half an hour before they got away in the raft, in spite of Hunter having told me that she would swim as she was; the cause of the delay being they had nothing to serve them for paddles but planks, which they had to taper with the chopper at one end, in order to grasp them. In all this time, however, the boat barely drifted a hundred yards to the westward, showing the languor of the tide and its direction at that

time. Yet my impatience was so great that it was a positive torture. I would not shout to the men, for I could see they were doing their best; yet it would have eased me to stand and roar, for I was mad to secure the boat, and every minute that passed seemed to my crazy anxiety like the mouldering away of our chance.

I was greatly tormented also by Norie's questions. He would ask me first one thing, then another; was miserably importunate; one moment wringing his hands, and saying the men would lose the boat; then shouting that the boat had vanished, and begging me for the love of God to look for her, and tell him if I could see her; and then, when I had pointed her out, raving again at the men's slowness. Miss Tuke hardly spoke; but her excitement and anxiety were fully as great as mine and Norie's. Her eyes were on fire, and yet she was mortally pale; her bosom panted as though she was fresh from a race, and once she caught Carey's arm

and held it, as though she were about to sink down. The sun stood over the point of reef where the yacht had beaten, in the southwest sky, and the heavens being cloudless, the sea within the compass of the reflection of the luminary was like a sheet of flashing gold. It was impossible to look at it; it was nearly as blinding as the sun himself. Fortunately the boat was to the eastward of that splendour, where the water was 'dark blue, beautifully pure in tint, and that which helped me to keep the boat in sight was the light swell, that would heave it up an instant and expose a portion of the streaming frame, which the sunshine touched and set on fire, so that at such moments the brilliant reflection in the wet planks might have passed for a sun-bright star shining in the soft deep azure of the ocean.

At last the raft was ready. Hunter got into the box amidships, that was big enough for one only, and Tripshore sat just before it, his legs under him, like a tailor. Both

men kept their faces forward. They paddled nimbly, and though the raft was not more shapely than a stage that a carpenter works upon over a ship's side, they managed to impel it at a fair pace. They had to come down the creek, and strike the sea at the opening between the beach and the reef; but the water was very smooth, there was scarcely any tide, and in five minutes they were clear of the reef, and propelling the raft very steadily towards the boat.

I ran down the hill to the beach to watch them from that point, and the others you may be sure followed me. I found that I could see the boat as plainly from the beach as from the hill, and perceived that the men had it in sight too, by the steadiness with which they aimed the raft at it. We all stood in a breathless state, watching the strange figure of that raft, and the sparkle of the paddles as the men flourished them. Our lives might depend upon the amazing discovery of that boat, that veritable God-send,

which lay floating there, and the one passionate thought in me now was, will she be in a fit state to carry us ?

Nimbly as the men plied their paddles, the raft took a desperate long time in reaching the boat. I knew that not only by my impatience, but by the passage of the magnificent flood of light upon the sea. Even when the raft seemed quite close to the boat, she was still a good distance off, and I waited and waited to see the flash of the little paddles cease, until I believed the men would go on paddling for ever.

But even so weary a waiting must come to an end at last. The paddles were dropped, and keeping my eye at the glass, I perceived the men lean over and endeavour to right the boat. Three times they tried, each time depressing the keel to the water's edge, but no further ; but the fourth time they succeeded ; and then, instead of her keel, I saw the gunwales of the boat, like a black line upon the blue.

I now supposed they would make the line fast, and begin to tow her; instead of which they fell to baling her out, one with his boots and the other with his cap. This would be a tedious process; but on reflection I judged they would not be able to tow the boat full of water, for the raft was hard enough to propel alone. I watched the baling with a feeling of passionate expectation. If the boat was injured, the water would flow into her as fast as they threw it out; if uninjured, her gunwales would rise. I explained this to Miss Tuke and Norie, and we watched the boat as persons standing upon a gallows might watch for the messenger who is coming with a reprieve, but who may come too late.

At last I clearly perceived that the gunwales rose. I could not be deceived. The telescope was a good one: when I had first looked at the boat after they had righted her, her gunwales only made a thin line, and now they were showing to the

height of three or four inches. By this I knew that if the boat leaked at all, the leak would be a trifling one, to yield to such baling as that; and in a transport of delight I shouted out that the boat was sound! that our deliverance was at hand! and ran to Sir Mordaunt, pointing to the boat, and calling that our deliverance was at hand! He was too much affected to speak; he got up, and stood looking. I gave him the glass, and asked him to judge for himself how the boat grew up out of the water. He rested the telescope on my shoulder, and I felt the tube trembling in his grasp. He peered, and exclaimed, "There can be no question that she is the *Lady Maud's* boat, Walton. I see the gilt stripe round her."

"She must be the boat that the men launched," I answered, "and that capsized with them. She must therefore have been floating about here ever since, and it is wonderful that we have not seen her before."

"She was our biggest boat!"

"Certainly she was!" I cried. "She will carry us all! We have but to rig and stock her with provisions and water, and sail away in her."

"Ah!" he said, in a trembling voice, "God has watched over us!"

I felt that as profoundly as he, and could have fallen on my knees. It was as though a miracle had been wrought, to find that boat there close to the island, manifestly uninjured by the heavy seas which the gale had raised, drifting into our sight in time to stop Hunter from risking his life on his miserable raft, and at the very moment when our prospects looked utterly dark and hopeless.

The men gave over baling after they had been at that work about three-quarters of an hour. The line of immersion indicated that there was still water in the boat, but she showed a good side, and was no longer the drowned thing she had been. The sinking of the sun warned them to stop baling: it

was approaching the horizon, and there would be no twilight to help us when it was gone. They kept their places in the boat, and took the raft in tow, and by leaning over the side managed to paddle the boat along as fast again as they could have urged the raft. Indeed, they were not above twenty minutes in performing the journey. We stood on the beach to receive them, and when they were within earshot we all of us cheered and cried to them. They answered our shouts heartily ; and so, paddling the boat around the point of reef, they brought her to the entrance of the creek and came ashore, bringing with them the end of the tow-line.

It would have moved you, I am sure, to have seen us shaking hands with the two men. We crowded round them, and only let them go because they said they were wild with thirst. Norie and I then waded into the water, and, laying hold of the boat's gunwale, looked into her. There was

not more than a foot of water in her, and this being as bright as glass, I could clearly see that her bottom was perfectly sound. Indeed, I could not perceive that she had sustained any injury, unless I except the loss of her rudder and her amidship thwart, that was started on the port side.

I called to Sir Mordaunt: "She is an old friend, and you were not mistaken. Here is the name *Lady Maud* in black and white"—pointing to the stern.

In truth she might well have been called the yacht's long-boat, for, when on the chocks just abaft the foremast, she had the look of a long-boat, with her square stern, plump sides, and motherly beam. Her brass rowlocks hung by their laniards; her rudder was, as I have said, gone, but the gudgeons were standing—that is, the eyes on which the rudder had been hung.

To secure her for the night, Norie and I hauled her to the head of the creek, which brought her close to the beach.

"There is nothing the matter with her," said I to Tripshore, as he and Hunter rejoined us.

"Nothing, praise the Lord," he replied.

"She'll want a new rudder," said I, "and we must rig her. But that is easily done. To-morrow morning we'll set to work and give her an outfit."

"Will she carry us all?" asked Miss Tuke.

"Ay, miss, and half as many again," answered Hunter. "That fore-tops'l yard there, Mr. Walton, will be the very thing for a mast. Pity we sent away the top-gallant-yard in the raft this morning, sir."

"Oh, we'll find something to bend a sail to," said I; glad to find that the man's mutinous manner had left him, and that he talked with his old civility.

As we strolled slowly back to the hut the sun sank, and so magnificent was the sight of the huge red and flashing luminary, poised like a vast wheel of fire upon the

polished red water, that we all stopped to look at it, and kept silence as the orb gradually drew down. For a few minutes after it was gone, the sky in the west seemed as though a great city was burning out of sight under it, so terribly splendid was the crimson glare upon the heavens. But this awful and majestic light faded fast, sea and sky took a kind of yellow colour, and then they became grey, and quickly changed into darkness, and night came upon us with a single stride, with a bright moon overhead, and the water in the north full of starlight.

The discovery and possession of our boat had put us all into fine spirits. Instead of entering the hut, we seated ourselves upon the coral sand at the top of the beach, and clear of the grass, that soon began to sparkle in the moonshine with the dew. The air was moist, but it was deliciously cool, and it was pleasanter to sit in the light of the bland and beautiful planet than in the dark.

hut ; and, moreover, there was something finely in harmony with our hopeful and grateful spirits in the peace of the sea, with the darkness and the stars in the north and east, and the flood of moonlight in the south, and in the soft creaming of the little breakers and the distant melodious wash of the swell over the line of reef.

We sat talking of our chances of escape, and in what direction we should steer the boat. I told them a story of three sailors who had sailed a smaller boat than ours over two thousand miles of sea, and related some of the hardships they had endured ; how they never despaired, but manfully struggled on and on ; until, after many days, and after they had measured the amazing distance of two thousand miles, they were picked up by a brig, and safely landed in England.

Then we talked over the provisioning of the boat. Miss Tuke asked how we should be able to carry water to drink.

"In the beef cask," said I. "We will test it. If it leaks, we must endeavour to make it tight."

"There's the sherry cask," said Tripshore.

"I know," I replied; "but we will carry the sherry with us, if the other cask will hold water."

"How much will it hold?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"Between twenty and thirty gallons, I should say," I replied.

"And how long will that quantity last?" inquired Norie.

"Why," said I, "don't you see, Norie, that must depend upon how much we use. Twenty-five gallons will be two hundred pints. There are eight of us, and even a liberal allowance would give us a fortnight's supply."

"We could sail across the Gulf in that time," exclaimed Mrs. Stretton.

"Norie," said Sir Mordaunt, leaning towards the doctor, and speaking softly,

though I heard him, "before we quit the island, you will keep your promise?"

"I will set about it in the morning," responded Norie.

I knew this referred to the cross that Sir Mordaunt wished to erect over his wife's grave. Hearing what had been said, I remarked that, as there would be a deal of work to be done in the morning, it would be wise to settle the programme at once.

"You, Norie," said I, "will carry out Sir Mordaunt's wishes. That will be your part, and we shall expect nothing else from you. You and I, Tripshore, will fit and rig the boat. Hunter, you will help Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke to empty the beef cask, and then test it, and if it leaks you must turn to and make it tight—if you can; and if you can't, then we must capsize the sherry and use that cask. Mrs. Stretton, you will cook more beef after breakfast, so that we can ship a fair supply; and, indeed, you and Miss Tuke and Carey will see to the

provisions, for when Hunter is done with the cask, he'll join us at the boat. Is my programme to your liking?"

They all said yes, it would do very well.

"But what is my work?" said Sir Mordaunt.

"Why," said I, "you can act as overseer, and take care that there is no skulking among us."

My poor friend probably felt that this was about as much as he could do, for though he begged a little to be made practically useful, he gave over his entreaties very soon.

For nearly an hour we remained talking in this manner; but now the dew was falling like rain, and I advised the ladies to withdraw to the hut.

"Let us thank God, before we retire, for the mercy and goodness He has shown us this day," said Sir Mordaunt.

So we all knelt down upon the sand in the moonlight, whilst the baronet prayed

aloud ; and when our thanksgiving was over we shook hands, - and all of our company, except the seamen and I, withdrew to the hut.

" We had better keep watch, as we did last night, my lads," said I.

" Ay, ay," they answered.

We debated, and then settled that Tripshore should stand the first watch, Hunter the second, and I the last.

" Is it worth while keeping the fire in ? " asked Tripshore.

" No," I replied. " I am satisfied that no vessels approach these waters, and a fire is useless. The weather looks settled ; we shall have the sun in the morning, and then we can light the fire. Keep your eye on the boat, Tripshore, and watch for any more wreckage that may come ashore."

So saying, I went to the hut, followed by Hunter, and dragging up a bit of the sail, so as to make a pillow, I put down my head, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER V.

I WAS awakened by Hunter. It was quite dark, for the moon had gone. I rose and went into the open air, and found the sky cloudless as I had left it, and the stars shining brightly. Some of the stars upon the horizon were so large and clear that they looked like the riding-lamps of ships lying close off shore, or lighthouse lamps. There was breeze enough to keep the water shivering, and the temperature was as chilly as an October night in England.

After a while I felt the darkness and the silence very oppressive. The sea made a peculiar moaning noise at the other side of the island, and the wind murmured with a complaining note among the trees where

the hut stood. I felt then, as I had often felt before when on board ship, that at sea loneliness is never a keener sense than on a quiet, fine night. Wrapped in shadow, the deep is a mystery, and the glorious stars, instead of cheering, chill the mind by their measureless distance, and by the soul-subduing wonder of the black and spacious heights they illustrate.

Along the beach where the breakers ran were thin lines of blue fire, and beyond, again, the phosphorus flashed and faded in the invisible swell as it coiled noiselessly along the ebony surface of the water. However, I fixed my thoughts upon the work that the sun would rise upon, and whilst I moved to and fro, plotting and planning and thinking over our wants when in the boat, and on what course I should steer her, the east grew pale, and very quickly the dawn came. In that ashen light the sea and the island and the grey heaven of fainting stars made an indescribably melancholy

spectacle. But soon the east became of a delicate rose-colour, that swiftly brightened into a radiant pink; and then, as with a bound, the sun soared out of the sea, the heavens grew blue, the water sparkled like silver, and another brilliant, beautiful tropical day was born.

My spirits revived with the sun, and after glancing at the boat to see that she was all right, and running my eye over the beach to observe if any more wreckage had washed up, I set to work to collect a quantity of brushwood, and piling a portion of it in the fireplace that had been built, I unscrewed one of the magnifying lenses in the telescope, and very soon had a blaze. Then, to economise time, I went down to the boat, taking with me the shells we had used as drinking vessels, and baled her out. When she was dry I thoroughly overhauled her, and found her perfectly sound, with those exceptions I have elsewhere mentioned. I returned to the beach, and having selected

a piece of planking fit to serve for a rudder, I fetched the chopper and a knife, and fell blithely to work to fashion a rudder. This, to be sure, was a very trifling job, and I had finished it, and was turning over the spikes in the carpenter's chest, to select a couple of them to bend into pintles, when Tripshore and Hunter came out of the hut, and before they reached me all the others appeared.

Hunter had forgotten what his work was, and when I reminded him, he at once returned to the hut and set to work to empty the beef-cask.

Tripshore and I then started upon rigging the boat. First we carried the topsail-yard down to her, fitted it with stays, and shaped one end of it with the chopper, so as to step it. The yard-arm sheave-hole was the very thing for halliards, and happily plenty of gear had washed ashore with the sails and yards to serve us with material for stays and rigging. When we stepped the yard we found it suited the boat to a hair. We

securely set it up, meaning to rig the boat with a single lug, which, having regard to the hoist of her mast, would be sail enough, and returned to the wreckage on the beach, to choose a piece of timber that we could split, and then fish the pieces, to form a gaff or yard.

However, feeling very hungry, we knocked off before tackling this job, and went up to the hut for breakfast. I shook hands with Sir Mordaunt and the ladies, and looking about me, asked where Hunter was.

"Why," said the baronet, "he has rolled the beef-cask to the well, to test it by filling it."

"Couldn't he have done that with salt water?" I asked.

"He asked me to explain," continued the baronet. "He said that after washing the salt out of the cask he would fill it. If it didn't leak, then, by lashing a couple of planks or spars, one on each side, to it, you and Norie and he and Tripshore could carry

the cask full of water across the island, which would save the delay and labour of going to and fro to fill it with the kettle. If, on the other hand, it leaked, then he said he could repair it as well there as here."

"The man's no fool," said I. "That notion of carrying the cask full, direct from the well, shows forethought, for it certainly would take us all day, journeying to and fro, to fill it with the kettle. But how is he going to fill it? He's left the kettle behind." And I pointed to the kettle, that stood near the hut.

"He emptied Carey's work-box, saying that would do to bale out the water from the well."

I burst into a laugh. "After that," said I, "who will doubt that necessity is the mother of invention?"

As I said this I caught sight of Hunter coming around by the bushes. He was purple in the face with heat, and flourished the work-box as he came.

"Well, Hunter," I cried, "how have you got on, my man?"

"The cask's sound," he replied. "It's full o' water, and don't drain a drop."

"Capital!" I exclaimed.

"There'll be nothen to do," said he, "but to lash a piece o' timber on either side, and bring the cask along, full, as it is. And the supporters 'll do to fix it in the boat with; ye'll have to keep it end up, and a few planks and a piece o' sailcloth 'll save it from slopping."

We all heartily praised his foresight. I asked Mrs. Stretton if we could have breakfast.

"Yes," she answered, in her simple way, and her fine, rich voice. "That kettle is full of turtle, Mr. Walton, ready to eat."

But before breaking our fast we knelt down, to offer up thanks to God for His merciful protection. I make no excuse for recording these prayers. They cheered us greatly. They reminded us of the Friend

to whom we had been taught all our lives that no appeal is ever made in vain. They made us look up and feel that, desolate, shipwrecked, destitute as we were, yet with God to help us we should be as strong, our prospects as bright and sure, as though we were in a situation to supply all the means necessary to liberate us from this imprisonment. I particularly noticed that none of us were more earnest at these times than Tripshore. He had been an ocean sailor, and in spite of landsmen's theories about Jack, I never knew a real sailor—I mean a genuine seaman, who has knocked about in big ships and looked danger in the eye, and knows the sea as a child knows its mother's face—who had not a veneration for God in his soul, who had not in his heart all the makings of an honest religious man, no matter how he covered up his instincts and assumed the indifference which he dropped when alone, or when a call was made upon his inner nature.

We made a good breakfast, for the turtle was excellent eating, though for salt we had nothing better than the brine in which the beef was pickled. We wanted water, however, and drew lots who should fill the kettle. It fell to Norie, who trudged off cheerfully, and was back before we had finished our meal.

If I was sure of finding no other audience than sailors, I would go closely into the preparations we made for leaving the island ; but landsmen cannot follow sea terms, and there is no other language in which a man can write about the sea than the language sailors themselves use.

As regards the rigging of the boat, we had pretty well all we wanted to our hands. Hunter joined us, having done with his cask, and before the sun had reached the meridian we had fitted the boat with a rudder and tiller, shaped some planks into the likeness of oars, fashioned a yard and bent a sail to it, and knocked the started thwart into its place.

This brought us to the dinner hour, and when we went to the hut to get something to eat, I found that Mrs. Stretton had cooked several pieces of beef, and that Miss Tuke and Carey had, between them, packed the biscuits in the maid's box, and stored all the best of the flour in the tinned-meat cases, which receptacles were compact, and to our purpose. I forgot Norie's share until we had done dinner, when Sir Mordaunt, taking my arm, led me round to the side of the hill, where I saw a rude cross firmly set up over the grave, and upon the cross-piece, in bold letters, "Agnes Brookes," with the date of her death. I put my hand upon the cross, and found it as firm as a tree.

"Norie has done his work very well," said I.

"He has, and I am deeply obliged to him," replied Sir Mordaunt.

"The task has occupied him the whole morning. It was tedious work. He was

forced to use a piece of rock for a hammer, as the chopper was constantly in use among you on the beach. I shall quit this island with a very different heart from what I should have left it had we sailed away and left her lying as she was first buried, without a stone to mark her grave."

He spoke with the tears coursing down his cheeks, and grasping my hand, he thanked me for the sympathy I had shown him, and the readiness with which I had complied with his wishes.

I left him whilst he knelt down to say a short prayer, for the time of our embarkation was close at hand, and I hoped to have put the island out of sight before the sun was gone. I called to Norie and the men, and told them that our next business was to go across the island and fetch the beef-cask. They were ready to accompany me, so arming ourselves with some seizings and a couple of pieces of timber, we marched across the island to the well.

We found the cask standing full of water as Hunter had left it. It was as tight as a shell, and on tasting the water I perceived that Hunter had carefully cleansed the cask of the salt. We lashed the pieces of timber to it, and the four of us stooping at once, we got the bars upon our shoulders and raised the cask, and away we went with it, keeping step, and presently landed the cask on the beach close to the boat.

But after we had put the cask down, and I had looked from it to the boat, I found myself glancing at the sherry-cask under the trees. It was a smaller cask by several gallons, but much stronger, and fitter for the storage of water.

"I doubt," said I to the others, "if there'll be room in the boat for both casks. Yonder cask should hold as much water as we are likely to need."

"I have been thinking of that, too, sir," said Tripshore. "The little 'un 'll be the better cask for us."

Both Hunter and Norie were of the same opinion.

"Then," said I, "I'll tell you what we'll do. This rain-water is not over sweet : we'll leave about a third of the sherry in the cask there, and fill it up with water, and that will make a refreshing drink."

This was thought a good notion ; so we went to work and let run about two-thirds of the sherry, filled up the cask with water, and fitting in the head of it, which had been knocked out, got the cask into the boat, and securely lashed it amidships. We then brought down all the provisions we meant to take with us ; fixed the little tell-tale compass to the after-thwart, put the telescope into the boat, took in some cloths of canvas to serve as a spare sail, and all being ready, we hauled the boat round to a point where the women could step aboard.

CHAPTER VI.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, the sun fiercely hot, and a little breeze blowing from the eastwards. After the women were in, we put the dog aboard, and then the rest of us entered. I had been greatly afraid that all this freight would sink the boat very deep ; but when we were all in I was rejoiced to perceive that, in consequence of the boat's beam, the point of immersion was not so high by a streak as I had feared.

I took the tiller, and on either side of me sat Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton. Sir Mordaunt sat next his niece, and Norie next the widow. Carey occupied a thwart just abaft the mast. The dog was in the bows,

and the men forward, working the paddles to bring us clear of the reef.

In this manner we went along until we had got the westernmost point of the reef under our stern. The men then threw in their paddles and hoisted the sail. There was a pleasant little breeze, as I have said, and the moment the boat felt the pressure, she began to run, making a pretty tinkling sound of water along her sides, and leaving two thin lines of foam and bubbles astern of her, and rolling over the swell very buoyantly.

I had made up my mind at starting to try for the land that was in sight, and accordingly headed the boat for the direction in which it bore, steering by the compass, for the land was invisible from the level of the water. I then asked Norie to lend me his pencil, and being without paper, drew a rude chart upon the after thwart; that is, I made a mark to signify the island we were leaving, and set down N. E. S. and W.

around it, according to the indication of the compass.

Miss Tuke asked me what I was doing.

"We shall require to know the bearings of the island we were wrecked on," I replied; "for unless we get them it will be a thousand to one if ever we shall be able to recover the remains of Lady Brookes."

Sir Mordaunt instantly pricked up his ears.

"How will that help us, Walton?" he asked, eagerly.

"If I mark off our courses," I replied, "then, should we be picked up by a vessel, or make inhabited land, we shall be able to calculate by the latitude and longitude of the vessel, or the land, whereabouts our island is. Of course we cannot hope to be quite accurate, because we shall have to guess our rate of sailing. But we shall be sufficiently near the mark to render the search for the island easy to any vessel you may send for the coffin."

He was much touched by this proof of my anxiety to help the wish that lay so close to his heart. But Sir Mordaunt Brookes was a man for whom I had a sincere affection, and there was little, indeed, I would not have done to serve him.

After I had made my scrawl on the thwart, we sat all of us for a while in silence, looking at the receding island and the passing water. It was a most perfect tropical day, both sea and sky of a dark, unspeakably pure azure, and wind enough to propel the boat along at about four land-miles an hour. But the sun was terribly fierce, and scarcely endurable. Sir Mordaunt wore Tripshore's hat, and Tripshore had on a woman's straw hat that had come ashore in Carey's box. Norie had twisted a kind of turban cap for himself out of a piece of canvas, and was the best off of us all, as the stuff was white, and kept his head cool. But to sit in that boat without any protection, for the sun was almost directly over-

head, was like leaving ourselves to be slowly roasted alive ; and unable to stand the heat any longer, I called Hunter and Tripshore aft, to spread the spare sail as an awning, which, after some trouble, they succeeded in doing, by setting up a couple of paddles as stanchions, and making the clews of the sail fast to them.

This shade afforded us indescribable relief, and helped us to pluck up our spirits, which really swooned in us with the heat.

"Look what a little bit of a rock that island is !" exclaimed Miss Tuke, pointing astern. "What a hard destiny, that with all this wide sea around us, we should have struck upon that tiny spot !"

"Ay," said Sir Mordaunt, "but it would have been a harder destiny had we struck without being able to land upon it."

"Are you pretty comfortable, Mrs. Stretton ?" said I, turning to the poor woman by my side, who sat with her hands on her lap, and her fine eyes fixed upon the sea.

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Walton," she answered. "Will you let me ask, if the island you are aiming for is not inhabited, how you will steer?"

"To the southward and eastward," I said; "because we were bound to be well to the north when we struck, and by steering south and east we can hardly fail, even if we miss the populated islands, to drive into the channels where we shall encounter ships."

"Which channel do you suppose will be the nearest?" asked Norie.

"I wish I knew. I have the names of three channels in my head—Crooked Island Passage, Mariguana Passage, and the Caicos Passage—but how they bear, and which one is nearest, I have no more idea than that dog."

"By heading as you propose, Walton," said Sir Mordaunt, "is there not a chance of your missing the land, or drifting out of the track of ships?"

"No," said I, "because by so steering

we're bound, if we keep going on long enough, to run down one of the West India Islands."

Foot by foot as we went, the island we were quitting grew smaller and smaller, and its features became indistinguishable in a kind of hazy yellow. The land for which we were trying was visible over our bows, but it was still too far off to make sure of, even with the glass, though my belief was, after a long inspection of it, that it was no more than a cay, similar to the one we had left, but bolder and larger.

Such minute objects as those two specks of land presented heightened rather than impaired our sense of the vast surface of water on which we floated. In such weather as this we were no doubt as safe in that boat as if we had been aboard a thousand-ton ship; and yet it was impossible to cast our eyes upon the water within a few inches of the gunwale, and then follow the mighty space of gleaming blue to where it met the heavens,

without a shudder at the nearness of the great deep. I remember saying to Tripshore, who sat forward, I could not imagine that these wide waters were never traversed by vessels.

"But, sir," said he, "if, as you have all along reckoned, we're in the thick of the Bahama clusters, there's ne'er a vessel as 'ud have any business here."

This was true, and very soon after he had made that answer, the reason why this sea was desolate was vigorously brought home to me by an exclamation from Hunter, who had been hanging his head over the side; for looking to see what had made him call out, I found that the boat was at that moment gliding over a reef that might have been one or ten fathoms below us, for aught I could tell, though it seemed to be within arm's length, so exquisitely transparent was the blue water. The reef was white, and gleamed like silver set in dark blue glass. It was evidently very precipitous, and no

more than a narrow shelf, for when we had passed it by a boat's length we could see nothing but the fathomless blue under the side. In the course of time that submerged reef would raise its head and become an island, with trees and vegetation. It was wonderful to see land, so to speak, in the very making of it.

The sun was fast approaching the sea by the time we had neared the island we were heading for ; but long since we had discovered with the help of the glass that it was no more than a cay, uninhabited, with a high rise of land, hard upon forty feet tall, at the northernmost point of it. We could see the sandy beach and the flat land stretching from the foot of the rise, covered with brushwood and trees ; and what was more, we could perceive the water all round it studded with reefs, upon which the swell broke in flashing floods of foam, that were blood-red in the rich evening sunshine.

"There's no use going any nearer," said I.

"No, sir, we're near enough," cried Tripshore. "Any one of them reefs would rip the bottom of this boat out of her."

Without another word I eased off the sheet and put the helm up, and presently we had the island on our quarter, and the sun beyond, a great red shield going down without a cloud, and the water beneath it a sheet of molten gold, the extremity of which seemed to touch our boat's side.

Whilst daylight remained we served out supper. We also took down the sail we had used as an awning, and spread it at the bottom of the boat, for the women to lie on when they felt disposed to sleep. Before I ate my allowance of food I gave the tiller to Norie, and stood up against the mast with the glass, with which, taking advantage of the singular brightness and clearness of the atmosphere at this hour of sundown, I carefully swept the water line, but failed to detect any other object than the island astern and a fragment of the island we had

quitted, quivering on the horizon in the north-east. The others watched me eagerly as I ran the glass round the sea, but nothing was said when I exclaimed that there was no vessel to be seen. Indeed, if I could judge their feelings by mine, they were too deeply glad to be in this boat, and sailing away from the island, to find a cause in the vacant sea-line for worrying their hearts. Only a few hours ago our prospects were horribly dark. We were, so to say, locked up on a desolate rock. In their misery and abandonment my companions had sanctioned Hunter's mad scheme; and now here we were in a brave stout boat, a beautiful heaven above us; we were well stocked with provisions, and in respect of accommodation, not much more inconvenienced than in the hut.

We watched in silence the going down of the sun. It was a noble sight, and full of unspeakable pathos to people in our situation, and to the half-despondent, half-hope-

ful temper we were then in. The breeze followed us, and the sun was on our right. I wondered when that sun set again where we should be. It had shone that day over our beloved country, it had looked upon dear friends and dear scenes, and now it was going down upon our little boat, a speck, unseen by any eye but God's, upon the golden surface of this glorified western ocean. I believe all our thoughts ran somewhat in this way, for, as I have said, none of us spoke whilst the orb was sinking. Even the two seamen looked towards it in rapt postures, and when the last flashing fragment of it vanished, we all drew a deep breath and turned to gaze at one another, and I observed that Mrs. Stretton was crying, but very silently, and in a way that made us see that any notice taken of her would pain her.

"We shall have the moon with us for the greater part of the night," said I; "and that beautiful sky cannot deceive us. It is full of good promise."

"How fast are we sailing, Mr. Walton?" asked Miss Tuke.

I answered about three and a half miles an hour.

"How short the twilight is!" cried Norie. "Look behind you, Walton. The sky is full of stars. The darkness in the east and that brightness in the west give you night and day side by side."

"Couldn't you spin a yarn, Mr. Walton?" said Tripshore. "There's nothen like stories and songs to keep the heart up."

"But our hearts are not down, Tripshore," I replied. "Our chances are too good for that. Can you sing?"

"A trifle," he said. "But if it's to be singing, I'd rather not be first."

"Well, I'll break ground by telling an adventure," said I; "and when I'm done you'll give us a song."

"Right, sir."

I reflected a bit, and then spun them a yarn about an adventure I met with at a

little Chinese village up the Yellow River. Three or four of us, being ashore, had missed our way, and coming to this village, endeavoured to obtain beds for the night, but were everywhere repulsed. Being determined not to lie in the fields, we forcibly took possession of a little house, and went to bed in it. In the middle of the night I and one of my companions, who lay with me on the top of a mattress, felt it moving, and getting up and tumbling it over, we found the owner of the house and his wife under it, half dead with fear and suffocation.

When we dragged them out, they made such a noise that a crowd of the villagers came to the house. We feared for our lives, but there was no light, and we had to grope our way. I missed the way, and coming to a door, opened it, and put out my hand to feel, and stroked my fingers down a Chinaman's face, the door I had opened being a cupboard, and the man in it hiding there in terror of us. I made them laugh with

my description of the horror I felt when I stroked down this naked face. I took it to be a dead man, but not being sure, half closed the door to prevent him coming out, and felt for him again, till I came to his bit of a nose, which I pulled until he screeched out, on which I scrambled across the room, and coming to a door, made out of the house by a back way, and ran for my life.

This story put Norie in mind of a hospital adventure, and when he was done Tripshore sang. He had a strong voice and a correct ear, and his song was a sailor's song, the melody of which was the windlass chorus, "Across the Western Ocean." Hunter and I knew the air, and guessing at the words, we helped Tripshore by joining in at the end of every verse.

By this time the night was all about us, the moon brightly shining, and the great stars flaking the sea with their trickling silver. These crystalline reflections were

made exceedingly beautiful by the play of the phosphorus in the sea. The mysterious fires rolled with the swell, and resembled puffs of green steam. The water broken by the boat's stem tinkled through our voices like the bubbling of a fountain, but so strongly phosphorescent was the sea, that our wake was a line of fire; and when Miss Tuke leaned over to look at it, I saw it shining in her eyes and shimmering upon her face, as though phosphorus had been rubbed over her skin.

Our story-telling and singing not only killed the time, but did us good by distracting our thoughts from our position. I kept the ball spinning as long as I could, and then we fell into a general conversation, in the midst of which, and whilst the seamen in the forward part of the boat were arguing upon the bearings of the island we had left, and whilst Norie, who had taken a seat next to Miss Tuke, was talking with her in low tones, I found myself asking Mrs. Stretton

what would be her plans when she arrived at Kingston.

"I hardly know, Mr. Walton. I feel like an ocean stray. Besides, I may not be able to get to Kingston, for, should we be picked up by a vessel, we can scarcely suppose that she will be bound to that place."

"Have you no friends in Ireland?" I asked.

"Yes, but they are poor. They will be able to do nothing for me."

"You have other friends who are not poor," said Sir Mordaunt, gently. "Your future need give you no anxiety."

She held her peace, perhaps scarcely understanding him. But I did. Indeed, I had all along suspected that if our lives were preserved my great-hearted friend would stand by this poor woman whom he had been instrumental in rescuing from a horrible death.

I thought the hour would now be about nine, or even later, and counselled the

women to lie down and take rest whilst the boat ran quietly. There was room for all three of them to lie upon the sail in the bottom of the boat, and as Miss Tuke hung back, I got Carey to set the example. She crouched down and got under the thwarts, and when she had stretched herself along the sail she said she was very comfortable. Then Mrs Stretton lay down, and after a little persuasion from her uncle, Miss Tuke crept under the thwarts. So there were the three of them, snug enough. The end of the sail rolled up furnished them with a pillow, and the other end was turned over them. The thwarts, overshadowing their faces, protected them from the moonlight and the dew.

As for us men, there was nothing for it but to sleep as we could. The seamen and I divided ourselves into watches, as we had done on the island, it being arranged that I should steer and keep a look-out for the first two hours. These fellows made no

trouble about sleeping. Tripshore put his back against the mast, folded his arms, dropped his head, and was asleep in a few moments. Hunter was bothered at first to pose himself comfortably. He tried first one place, then another, until at last he hit upon a posture that pleased him—in the eyes, with his face looking aft, and the dog bolstering him on the right side, and in a short time he was as motionless as the other.

But neither Sir Mordaunt nor Norie could go to sleep for some time, though the doctor closed his eyes and kept his head hung. Sir Mordaunt, indeed, did not try to sleep for a while, but sat close against me, speaking in whispers. We had much to talk about—our cruise, our shipwreck, Lady Brookes' death, our present position, and our chances of preservation. At last weariness mastered him, his voice failed him, and he began to nod, and soon, by his regular breathing, I knew he was asleep.

The breeze held steady; a little more

weight had come into it before Sir Mordaunt fell asleep, and the sail pulled well. The narrow furrows of the sea ran in short flashes of foam and broke up the starlight in the water, but gave instead a brilliant surface of phosphoric radiance. On our starboard beam the ocean was a tremulous field of moonlight, but the horizon in the north was very dark, though the lustre of the moon made the sky pale to a long distance beyond the zenith. The water seethed at the boat's stem, and the sobbing sounds caused by the eddies in the wake were very mournful for me, a solitary listener, to hearken to. Indeed, it was a solemn time. It was not only the thoughts of the narrow planks which lay between us and eternity, nor the speculation as to the future, that was for ever active in me. It was the being surrounded by sleepers; it was looking into the bottom of the boat and seeing the glimmering faces of the women in the darkness there; on one side of me the baronet, with

the moonlight shining on his hollow countenance, in which all the anguish of the past few days had left an imprint cruelly visible, even in that colourless light; on the other side Norie, who had met misfortune as a gallant man should, helping us all as heartily as was in his power, peacefully resting, with his chin upon his breast and his arm hanging idly down; and forward the figures of the two men and the dog, dark as bronze statues, and as motionless. I say, it was the looking first at those silent and unconscious beings, and then away at the leagues of sea, and the serene stars, and the silver moon, poised in the silvery blue ether, that made this watch of mine as solemn to me as a long prayer. The sense of loneliness no pen could express. The slumber of the people about me heightened it. Now and again one would mutter softly; once there came a laugh from the bottom of the boat; frequently I would hear a deep sigh, that sounded above

the mild complaining of the wind in the sail and the delicate hissing of the passing water.

Again and again I stood up to search the water, and shortly before I called Tripshore I thought I saw a darkness on the sky over the starboard bow ; but when I pointed the telescope at it I could see the stars there shining down to the very level of the deep.

But the bright moon was very comforting. It enabled me to see all my companions, and to command a wide expanse of water, which was like giving the soul breathing room, for nothing is more terrible than darkness to persons placed as we were. It seems to cloak and muffle up the instincts, and fold up the spirit as though it were death's mantle. Besides, I could watch the compass, and know how we were heading.

I held my place longer than two hours, as I believe, wishing Tripshore to get all the refreshment he could out of his spell of sleep ; but I grew so drowsy at last that,

lest I should unconsciously fall asleep myself, I was forced to arouse him. I had to awaken Norie, to hold the tiller, whilst I went forward to call Tripshore, not choosing to sing out to him and disturb the others. But before doing this I made a calculation of the distance run since we had left the island, and scribbled the figures down on the thwart.

At the first touch the seaman started up. I whispered to him that his watch had come round; and then telling him to keep the boat dead as she was going, to look smartly about for ships, and to call me if the wind drew ahead or the weather changed, I took his place, and speedily fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN I opened my eyes again, the dawn was just breaking, and I discovered, to my wonder, that I had slept right through the night. No one had aroused me. My limbs were as stiff as broomsticks, from having been kept in one posture for so many hours, and my clothes were saturated with dew. I gaped with something of astonishment at the scene of sky and ocean, for it was not easy to immediately realize our position. And then again the sight my eyes encountered was very striking for a man whose senses were struggling out of the cocoon of sleep to behold; for the dawn in the east lay in the sky like a sheet of delicately

green glass, faintly illuminated at the water line, and melting into blackness as it approached the zenith. But the rest of the heavens were wrapped in night, and the sea was of a pitchy black, even under the dawn, which made the horizon stand out against it with fearful distinctness.

But, even as my eye rested on that strange, cold, pallid green light, it changed its colour into primrose, the sky brightened into sapphire and gold, and the sun showed his flaming head.

Hunter was at the helm, and Tripshore asleep in the bows of the boat, but the sun woke him up ; and as I sat rubbing my legs, to get the blood to circulate, and looking around me, Sir Mordaunt called good-morning to me, and then Norie ; and glancing at the bottom of the boat, I perceived that everybody was awake.

I scrambled off my perch and helped the women on to their feet, and was glad to learn that they had all managed to get s

sleep. Then, taking the glass, I planted my back against the mast and searched the sea, that was now brightly illuminated by the soaring sun, but to no purpose: there was nothing to be seen.

The breeze that was propelling us when I fell asleep still blew, the water was smooth, and the morning had broken with a cloudless sky. Both Hunter and Tripshore told me there had been no change of wind or weather in their watches, and when therefore I made a calculation to jot down upon the thwart, I reckoned that we could not have run less than forty miles from the time of our leaving the island.

"It is impossible," I exclaimed, "that we can go on sailing very much longer without sighting land. That we have not made land sooner, I can only account for by supposing that the island on which we were wrecked must be lying further to the eastwards than we have imagined."

"In that case, ought we not to steer more

to the westward, Walton?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"I hardly think so," I replied. "Our object is to meet with ships, and not to box ourselves up among a mass of reefs and cays and uninhabited islands."

"Is the compass right, sir, d'ye think?" inquired Hunter.

"Yes," I said, "judging from the bearings of the stars, and the rise and set of the sun."

"Oh, Mr. Walton," cried Miss Tuke, "I hope we shall not have to pass another night in this boat!"

"Courage, Ada, courage!" exclaimed the baronet. "See what a beautiful day has come. Let us think of ourselves as a pleasure party blown out to sea further than we intended to go. There is no danger; a little patience, my love, and all will be well;" and he looked at her, lightly shaking his head, and smiling mournfully.

I glanced at her, to see how she bore all

this hard usage of the sea. Her roughened hair, her pale face full of deep anxiety and grief, her apparel creased and defaced by the wet and the wear and tear of shipwreck, did not in my sight, at all events, in the least degree impair her beauty. Indeed, I could not help thinking that all this disorder of attire, and the wild sparkle in her pretty eyes, and the restlessness of her movements and glances, gave her charms a character that accentuated them with a fresh and fascinating picturesqueness. Norie appeared to share in this opinion, for he would frequently look at her with fervent admiration.

Mrs. Stretton, on the other hand, was much more passive. She gazed dreamily at us with her fine dark eyes as we conversed, yet was always quick to give a smile to any of us who met her glance. She had a rougher appearance than Miss Tuke, owing to her black hair, which, as I have elsewhere said, was remarkably abundant, and hard to

stow away without combs and hairpins and such things. She, too, was very pale, but her lips were red and healthy, and her eyes clear and shining.

Of the women, indeed, Carey endured these trials the worst. She had been a plump, piquante little woman aboard the *Lady Maud*; but now her cheeks were fallen in, her eyes sunk and the hollows dark, her lips pale and dry and tremulous, and the expression of her face was haggard, like that of a sick person. I should have supposed that a woman in her station of life would have borne hardship very much more stubbornly than Miss Tuke. But the truth is, and most men's experience confirms it, the more thoroughbred a woman is, the more effectually can she cope with and support trouble. I would rather any day be in peril with a lady, with no experience whatever of hardships, than with a woman of mean extraction, who has had to rough it, who has had to work, and who therefore

sleep. Then, taking the glass, I planted my back against the mast and searched the sea, that was now brightly illuminated by the soaring sun, but to no purpose: there was nothing to be seen.

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my eyes, I saw him standing with his arm around the mast, and pointing to the sea over our bows.

"Sail ho!" he yelled.

At this magic sound the whole of us sprang to our feet as one person. The sun being well on the left of us, the horizon ahead was beautifully clear and the sea a soft violet, and upon it, quite visible to the naked eye, was a speck of white.

I snatched up the glass, and pointed it.

"Yes," I cried, "it is a sail!"

Miss Tuke clapped her hands, and gave a loud hysterical laugh.

"Which way is she standing, sir?" shouted Tripshore.

"I can't tell you yet," I replied. "She will be a square-rigged vessel, I believe, for what is showing of her canvas is square."

"Let me look at her," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, in a voice quivering with excitement.

I gave him the glass. He crossed over to

the mast, to rest the telescope against it, and took a long, long look, but could make no more of the object than I.

"But it *is* a sail, uncle?" cried Miss Tuke.

"Certainly it is," he replied; "but it is impossible to tell which way she is going."

The glass was passed from hand to hand.

"Let us finish our breakfast," said I, sitting down again. "Though that vessel should pass without noticing us, it is enough that we have seen her to prove that we are in navigable waters at last. There will be other vessels about, though we should miss yonder one: be sure of that."

They all seated themselves except Tripshorn, who had the glass, and kept it fixed on that small white spot; but though Sir Mordaunt and Miss Tuke pretended to eat, I saw that the sight of that sail had taken away their appetite. They could not remove their eyes from the horizon where that gleaming speck was.

I dare say my own emotions were not less strong than theirs, but I perceived the need of assuming an unconcerned demeanour, so that, if the vessel passed away from us, I should be able with a good face to say that her disappearance signified no more than another spell of patience for us, and that other sails would be showing before sundown. Nevertheless, I was looking, too, all the time at that distant sail, and every moment growing more and more puzzled by its steadiness and appearance.

"If yonder is a ship," I exclaimed at last, "she is bound to be coming or going our way. We are heading a steady course, and should have noticed by this time if she is crossing our hawse. But she's mighty slow if she's coming our way, and if she is steering as we are, what manner of vessel must she be to let a boat like this overhaul her?"

"What do you make of her, Tripshore?" called out Sir Mordaunt.

"Why, sir," he answered, "it looks to me as though that bit of white is the main-royal or topgallant-s'l of a ship heading south."

"But do we rise it?" I asked.

"No, sir. All that it does is to grow bigger, without rising," he answered.

I told him to pass me the glass, and I took another steady look. The object was unquestionably a ship's sail, apparently, as Tripshore had said, the main-royal of a ship; it was square, and white as silver; it was certainly bigger too than it was when I had first looked at it, which struck me as most extraordinary, for the enlargement of the sail proved that we were approaching it, and I could not conceive how it was that other portions of the vessel did not show themselves.

"No use speculating," said I; "we must wait and see."

There was a light swell rolling up from the westward, that made the water look like a waving sheet of dark blue shot-silk; the

sea was crisped with little foamy ripples, which ran along with us ; but the sun had gathered its fires fast, and was pouring them fiercely down upon our unsheltered bodies ; whilst the atmosphere seemed almost breezeless, in consequence of our being dead before the wind. At intervals a number of flying fish would spark out of the melting glass-like blue of the water, and scatter in prismatic flashes. A frigate-bird came up out of the north, and hovered at a height of about thirty feet over the boat, balancing itself on its exquisitely graceful wings for a minute or so, and then fled and vanished like a beam of light. But we took no notice of these things, nor of the stinging heat of the sun, our thoughts being chained to that sail ahead, that was slowly enlarging its form, but never rising, so as to exhibit other sails beneath it.

"That's no ship, sir," said Hunter, breaking a long silence.

"It looks like a small lugger-rigged boat," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt.

"It certainly is not a ship," said I.

We waited and watched. The sail was a most clear object now, and with the naked eye we could see that it was well on this side the horizon—indeed, the blue water-line rose beyond it.

On a sudden Tripshore let drop the glass to his side, and, looking around, motioned to me with his head. I quitted the helm, and clambered over to where he stood.

"Look!" said he, in a low voice, with a note of horror in it. "You may see what it is now."

His manner startled me. I took the glass hurriedly, and levelled it.

"My God!" I cried, "what a meeting!"

It was the raft we had sent adrift on the preceding day! The sail was full, the strange machine was swarming along steadily, at the masthead was the piece of inscribed plank, forming a cross upon the water, and with his back to the mast sat the dead messenger.

My blood ran cold. It was a dreadful object to encounter upon that lonely sea. And now that it was come, the disappointment stung me like the very fang of death. I looked round upon my companions, with a hopeless face.

"What is it?" cried Miss Tuke, instantly remarking my looks.

"The raft we sent afloat yesterday," I answered.

She hid her face in her hands. Sir Mordaunt sat looking at the thing, with stony eyes, but neither he nor Mrs. Stretton nor Carey made any observation. The raft was right ahead, and in a short time we should be up with it. To us, who knew what its freight was, it was bad enough to have even the sail of it in sight; but to come within eyeshot of the corpse, that would by this time be a most loathsome object, was a thing that would have been unendurable to our shaken and agitated and weary hearts. Interpreting my companions'

thoughts by my own, I returned to the helm, and headed the boat into the west. This brought the wind abeam; the little craft felt the increased pressure and buzzed along sharply, riding over the swell, that was now dead ahead, like a cork.

I whispered to the baronet that the corpse would have been too shocking an object for the women to see.

"Yes," he answered, under his breath; "and for us too. I could not have borne it. But I hope, now that the raft can no longer serve our purpose, it may speedily go to pieces. The inscription will set people hunting for us."

"If we are rescued, the news will soon get about," I answered.

We drew rapidly away from the forlorn and dismal fabric, yet it excited a fascination that constrained me to keep on stealing glances at it. The condition of mind to which our shipwreck had reduced me was well qualified to furnish a wild and ghastly

significance to that dead seaman sailing along out there. I could not dispossess my imagination of the idea that he was following me with his eyes, and I figured a kind of blind upbraiding in them for leaving him in that mocking, unconsecrated plight. I had the face before me as I had seen it when we sent the raft adrift. It was a dreadful memory to come into my mind at such a time, and a foolish disposition to shed tears assured me of what I had not before suspected, that our hardships and anxieties had lamentably reduced my strength, and that, if we continued in this state much longer, those weakly women there would be able to boast of much more physical stamina than I.

I believe this very thought was in my head when I was aroused from the miserable reverie into which I had sunk by Hunter shouting, "Sail ho!" at the very top of his voice. I started up savagely, maddened for the moment by the fear of another disap-

pointment. The man was pointing into the north-west, and Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke, clinging to each other, looked wildly in that direction, whilst Sir Mordaunt and Norie stood peering, with their hands shading their eyes.

"Do you see her, sir?" shouted Hunter. "It's no raft this time! See how she rises!"

I looked, and saw a sail—this time no raft indeed, as Hunter had said, but a vessel swiftly rearing her white canvas above the blue, inch by inch, foot by foot, so that, watching her with the glass, I saw her fore course come up until the arching foot of it was exposed, and then the glimmering top of the black hull quivered in the refractive light upon the water-line.

She was heading dead for us. Until we were sure of this, no one spoke; but when I cried out the news, Tripshore and Hunter and Norie uttered a loud hurrah! Miss Tuke clasped her hands above her head,

and gave a long, mad laugh ; Mrs. Stretton sobbed as if her heart would break ; Carey fell a-dancing in the bottom of the boat ; and Sir Mordaunt threw his arms round my neck, and, with his head lying on my shoulder, breathed like a dying man.

I broke away from my poor friend, and bawled to Hunter to lower the sail and stop the boat's way ; and, whipping a handkerchief out of Norie's pocket, I fastened it to one of the paddles, and bade Tripshore stand up in the bows of the boat and wave the signal.

The vessel came down upon us fast. What her rig was, I could not yet see. She had a main skysail set, and a coil of foam sparkled at her glossy sides, and ran up the sea behind her in a flashing white line. We had cheered, and given way to the passion of excitement and rapture that the sight of her had kindled in us ; but we grew silent very soon, and watched her coming, breathlessly. I knew her people

could not fail to see us. But would they heave-to? Would they attempt our rescue? We had to find that out, and the waiting was such mental agony as there are no words to convey any idea of.

One of the most moving memories which my heart carries of our shipwreck, is the faces of my companions turned towards the approaching vessel. Expectation had so wrought upon their lineaments, as to harden them into the severity and immobility of marble: they looked to have been petrified at the very moment when their staring eyes, their parted lips, the forward posture of their heads, showed that the hope and the fear in them were at their greatest height.

Suddenly Tripshore turned his gaping face aft, and cried, in a hoarse voice of triumph, "She'll heave-to, sir!" And, as he said this, the vessel, with her mainsail hanging in the leech-lines and her skysail halliards let go, slightly shifted her helm, and went past us at a distance of about five times her

own length, drawing out as she passed into a small handsome barque of about three hundred and fifty tons, with a clipper bow and elliptical stern, a low freeboard, and a white netting round her short raised after-deck. From this point, that was apparently the roof of a deck-cabin, several men were watching us, and forward a small crowd of heads overhung the bulwarks. As soon as she was to leeward of us, she put her helm down, swung her foreyards, and lay hove-to.

"Out with your paddles, men!" I shouted; and, in a fury of impatience, Tripshore and Hunter threw over the rude oars, and the boat went slowly towards the barque. As we approached, we were hailed by one of the men on the poop.

"Boat ahoy! What boat is that?"

I was overjoyed to be addressed in English, for I had feared from the appearance of the vessel that she was a foreigner. I put my hand to the side of my mouth, and shouted back—

"We are the survivors of the passengers and crew of the schooner yacht *Lady Maud*, that was lost four days since on a cay about sixty miles distant from here. We have been adrift since yesterday. Will you take us on board?"

He waved his hand, and answered, "Yes, yes; come alongside. But is that another boat out there?" pointing in the direction where we had last seen the raft.

"No," I cried. "I will explain what that is when we get aboard."

A rope was flung to us, the gangway unshipped, and some steps thrown over. All hands had assembled to see us arrive. The first to be handed up was Miss Tuke; she was followed by Mrs. Stretton and Carey; then went Sir Mordaunt and Norie, the rest of us following with the dog. On gaining the deck a giddiness seized me, and I had to keep fast hold of the arm of the man who had helped me up the steps, to save myself from falling. It was, in truth,

the effect of a wild hurry of conflicting emotions ; but a short stern struggle subdued the sensation, and glancing around at the men, who were staring at the women and ourselves with open mouths, I asked for the captain.

"I'm the master, sir," said a quiet-looking, sunburnt man, who stood close to the gangway.

I grasped his hand and shook it, and then, without further preface, told him our story, briefly indeed, though I gave him all the facts.

"Well, sir," said he, when I had done, glancing at Sir Mordaunt very respectfully, "you've had a hard time of it, and I'm glad to have come across you. This barque is the *Princess Louise*, from New Providence to Porto Rico. I hope Porto Rico isn't out of your way?"

"No," I answered. "We should be able to get to Europe from Porto Rico without trouble."

"Certainly," said he. "But we sighted a small boat out yonder. Does she belong to your people?"

I told him that she was a raft we had sent adrift from the island, with a board at the mast-head, inscribed with the circumstances of our shipwreck; but I said nothing about the dead man on it. I then begged him to tell us what reckoning his vessel was now in, explaining that Sir Mordaunt Brookes was anxious to have the bearings of the rock on which we had been wrecked, that he might recover the remains of his wife, for interment in England.

"Can you give me your course, and distance run?" said he.

I answered that it was jotted down on the after-thwart in the boat. He at once went over the side into the boat, entered the figures in a pocket-book, and returned.

"We'll get the bearings of your island fast enough presently," said he. "That's a good boat of yours—too good to send adrift.

Here, Mr. Swift," he sung out to a man I afterwards learnt was his chief mate, "get that boat cleared out, will you, and slung aboard. You can stow her on the booms. And swing the fore-yards as soon as that job's done. Bo'sun, take charge of these two men"—indicating Tripshore and Hunter—"and see that they get something to eat at once. Will you follow me, ladies and gentlemen?"

He led the way into the cabin, or deck-house. We hobbled after him, for, owing to our confinement in the boat and the want of space to stretch our limbs, we had some ado to work our legs properly. The cabin was a very plain interior, with a table amidships, flanked by hair sofas, and a row of five small berths on the port side. We sat down, not because we were weary, but because we found exercise an awkward and inconvenient effort. The captain, whose name was Broach, went to the cabin door and bawled to the steward, who was among

the men on deck, to put some beef and biscuit and claret upon the table. He then entered his berth, and returned with a large chart of the Bahamas and West India Islands, which I saw Sir Mordaunt devouring with his eyes, proving where his heart was.

"Yesterday," said Captain Broach, "we were in such and such a position, and our position now would be here," said he, putting his finger on the chart. "You say you have been running fifty miles to the south'ard and east'ard." He measured the distance, and exclaimed, "Here you are; here are two cays. It is one of these, gentlemen."

"It will be the one to the norrard," said I.

"Then," said he, writing down the position of the island on a piece of paper, and handing it to the baronet, "this will be the latitude and longitude of it, sir."

I reflected, and then addressing Sir Mordaunt, "Those bearings," said I, "prove that Purchase was heavily out in his latitude *as well* as his longitude."

He motioned, with an imploring gesture. "For God's sake, don't recall the man!" said he. "I desire," he continued, turning to the skipper, "that you will look upon us as passengers, for whose accommodation and entertainment you will charge as you think proper; though," he said, extending his hand for the other to shake, and speaking with great emotion, "no recompense we can make you will express our gratitude for the prompt and generous help you have given us."

"Say nothing about it, sir," answered the skipper, in a blunt, sailorly way. "It seems hard that shipwreck should befall gentlemen like you, to whom the sea is no business; and I am very sorry indeed for the ladies"—giving them a low bow. "Now, steward, bear a hand with the grub, man! Shove it on the table, *can't ye?*"

We had not long before eaten our breakfast in the boat, and even had we not already broken our fast, I question whether

the emotions which kept our hearts hammering in our breasts would have left us any appetite for the victuals on the table. But Captain Broach begged us so heartily to eat, that we made a show of munching, just to please him. He said he had but the cabins we saw. One of them was his, and the next one the mate's, and the third abutting on that the second mate's and carpenter's. "But," said he, "if you don't mind a squeeze, I think we can manage. The ladies will have that cabin"—pointing. "There are two bunks in it, and we can lay a mattress on the deck." And then he arranged for me to share the mate's cabin, Norie the second mate's, and Sir Mordaunt would have a cabin to himself.

This was a very good arrangement, and so the matter was settled.

We then inquired how long it would take to reach Porto Rico?

"I give the *Louise* four days," he answered, "reckoning fine weather and

breezes after this pattern. When I tell you that we left New Providence the day before yesterday at six o'clock in the evening, you'll believe the barque has got heels."

He sat talking with us, asking questions, and, with every answer we made him, growing more and more respectful. He told Sir Mordaunt that he would find no difficulty in chartering a small vessel to fetch Lady Brookes' body; indeed, he said, it would give him pleasure to see to that himself, for he knew a man at San Juan who owned a trading sloop, a fast vessel, that would not keep Sir Mordaunt waiting. He also told us that steamers from Liverpool, Southampton, Spain, and the United States touched at Porto Rico—how often he could not say, but often enough to serve our end.

"And now," said he, "there's Mr. Swift and myself—I'll say nothing about the second mate—plain sailors, with kits not good enough for a man to go to Court in; but such as our togs are, gentlemen, you're

heartily welcome to the loan of them till you can get better. I'm only sorry," addressing Miss Tuke, "that we can't accommodate you, ladies, in that way. But we're all men aboard the *Louise*, and so you'll please take that as our excuse."

He called the steward, to see to our cabins and supply our wants, and, bestowing a regular all-round bow upon us, he went on deck, where we could hear the men singing out as they braced round the yards and got way upon the barque.

My story is as good as ended. You have had our shipwreck, and now our rescue. But there still remains a short length of line to coil down, and I may as well leave the yarn clean and shipshape.

Imagine that two days have passed. In that time we have slept well, eaten well, pulled ourselves together. We have all of us knelt down in the cabin, and offered up

hearty and earnest thanks to Almighty God for His merciful preservation of us; and now we are looking about us with tranquil hearts, which have already grown used to this new condition of life, waiting with patience for the hour when the cheery cry of "Land ho!" shall bring us within reach of the scores of things our destitute condition demands; now and again talking of the dead; of the yacht, that the sea had scattered as the wind scatters chaff; and of our sufferings and anxieties and painful struggles on the little island. The weather remained beautiful—a constant wind blowing, though shifting occasionally to the northward and then hauling back again to the eastward, the sea calm and frosty with the breaking heads of the tiny surges, and a heaven of stainless, glorious, tropical blue.

It was the night of the second day, dating from our rescue. I had been conversing with Mrs. Stretton and Mr. Swift, the chief mate of the *Princess Louise*, who, it turned out,

had known Captain Stretton, and the vessel he commanded. In another part of the deck were Norie and Miss Tuke and her uncle. The moon was standing over the sea, shedding little or no radiance upon the sky, but whitening the water under it with lines of light which looked like silver serpents, as the swaying of the swell and the fluttering of the ripples kept them moving.

I left Mrs. Stretton and the mate, and walked to the end of the short poop. The wheel was just under me, and the figure of the fellow who grasped it was so motionless, that he and the wheel and the yellow binnacle-card were more like a painting than real things. I stood drawing at a cigar, enjoying the tobacco with unspeakable relish after my long enforced abstinence, and contemplating the beautiful dreamlike picture of the barque lifting her heights of glimmering canvas into the dark air, blotting out a whole heaven of stars with her dim and ghostly cloths, amid the hollows of which, and among the delicate

gear and rigging, the soft tropical breeze was whispering in notes that sounded like faint and distant voices singing. The eastern sky was glorious with stars, of such magnitude and beauty as you never behold in our northern climes, with a fine sharp whiteness, though here and there the smaller stars shone in delicate blues and in rose-colour, like the reflection of a bright flame in highly-polished metal. It was a night for solitude. The seething of the thin line of foam at the vessel's sides, the occasional clank of the wheel-chains, the mysterious song of the wind up in the darkness among the pallid sails there, the leagues of black water, the star-laden sky, and the moon clothing with the beauty of her soft, white, misty light a large circumference of the dark heavens, combined to produce a deep sense of peace in the heart, not without melancholy, but infinitely soothing, and to make one almost dread the intrusion of commonplace sounds.

My thoughts were full of the past, and

let me say of the future likewise. A low, soft, girlish laugh from the group at the other end of the deck had set my fancy rambling, and in the short time I was permitted to stand there musing, the thoughts which swept through my mind—a commingling of shipwreck and ocean perils, and of fancies very much nearer heaven than any the deep could yield me—made a wild and singular panorama of visions.

But my reverie was interrupted by Sir Mordaunt coming up to me. He stood at a little distance, peering, as if he was not sure, and then said, "Is that you, Walton?"

"Yes," I answered.

"What a perfect night, is it not?" he exclaimed. "It makes our shipwreck seem no more than a dream. We might still be on board the poor *Lady Maud*, and all the anguish we have suffered and escaped, a nightmare."

"We are lucky," said I, "to have fallen into such kind hands. But I am rather

puzzled to know what I shall do when we reach Porto Rico. Is there a consul there?"

"Oh," said he, "I have arranged with Captain Broach to obtain the funds we shall require. Don't let that trouble you."

"And Mrs. Stretton? Shall you send her to Kingston?"

"I will wait till I am ashore, to talk to her. I have a scheme—but I am not yet resolved. She shall find me her friend. She is strangely mixed up in the cruellest experience that ever befell me, and the sufferings she has passed through give her the strongest claims upon my sympathy. By the way," he continued, "I have a piece of news for you. It scarcely took me by surprise. Norie has proposed to Ada, and she has accepted him."

"Indeed!"

"I say I am not surprised, because I knew all along that he admired her. But I did not know that she was in love with him. Did you?"

"No."

"At the beginning of our cruise, don't you remember that she used to snub him?"

I said nothing.

"But," he said, "I am sure he will make her happy. I shall be glad to see her settled. I had hoped to have her as a companion, now that I am alone," said he, in a shaky voice; "but a husband is better than an uncle for a girl, and I cannot question, from her manner of speaking to me just now, that she is really attached to the doctor."

I kept my voice very well, and I am sure that he had no suspicion of the truth. Between that girl and me there had been little passages full of encouragement on her part. I held my peace while Sir Mordaunt talked on, coming presently to his wife, and speaking of her with tears in his voice, if not in his eyes. Then, taking my chance, I crossed over to where Miss Tuke and Norie were standing, looking at the waning moon—a blushing emblem of my own idle dream

—and addressing the girl with as much cordiality as I could infuse into my manner, I said that Sir Mordaunt had told me of her engagement, and that I would not lose a minute in offering her and Norie my sincere congratulations.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Walton," said she; and Norie added that he felt sure the news would give me pleasure.

And so ended a little business that everybody will smile at but I. But I relate it, because I doubt if the story of my shipwreck would be quite complete without it.

I put on a wooden face for the rest of the time, determined that Miss Tuke at all events should not suppose I considered myself jilted. But this matter hastened my departure from San Juan, where we arrived in due course. Sir Mordaunt begged me to stay until his wife's remains had been removed, and then accompany him and the others to Europe; but I told him I was anxious to get home,

and an opportunity for leaving Porto Rico occurring three days after our arrival, I took leave of my companions, bidding poor Mrs. Stretton a tender farewell, in the full belief that I should never see her again.

Two months after my return to England, I received a long letter from Sir Mordaunt. He told me that he had brought his wife's remains with him, and that they were now interred in the family vault at ——. Also (I should perhaps be surprised to hear), Mrs. Stretton had consented to come and take charge of his establishment, as housekeeper. He asked me to spend a fortnight with him, but I had other engagements, and could not get away.

Not very long after the receipt of this letter, came an invitation to attend Ada Tuke's marriage. I could not go, though I would gladly have been present, if only to sustain the character of indifference I had assumed. However, I took care to call upon the bride and her husband on their return

from abroad when passing through London, and, time being on my side, my impersonation could not have been better had my indifference been honest; and I was sure the bride went away convinced that any suspicions she might have had that I had been fond of her were altogether unfounded. Norie is now in practice in a town in the north of England, and I believe doing very well. Sir Mordaunt gave his niece five thousand pounds and a house of furniture, and I don't doubt they need all they can get, for the little Nories threaten to make a big family.

I often visited Sir Mordaunt, and when I first went down to his house I was pleased to find Tripshore installed there as a sort of all-round man, having no special duties, but lending a hand generally. He told me that Tom Hunter had left San Juan before the others, with a present from Sir Mordaunt of fifty pounds in his pocket, but what had become of him he did not know. Tripshore

and the noble dog who had saved our lives were great friends, and always together, I heard. The fine animal knew me at once, and it curiously delighted me to be remembered by him.

On every occasion of my visit to —— I had the pleasure of shaking Mrs. Stretton by the hand and complimenting her on her looks. The baronet would tell me that she managed his household capitally, and that if she left him he would miss her as he would his right hand. His references to the late Lady Brookes gradually grew less frequent, whilst his praise of the shipwrecked widow improved in strength and quality ; so that, exactly three years from the date of his arrival in England, I was not surprised to get a letter from him, in which he said that Mrs. Stretton had become Lady Brookes.

THE END.

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